PREFACE

This book is the result of three years (1926-1929) spent in Australia 114
in two field trips to northeastern Arnhem Land in the country bounded on the eastern and northern limits by the Sea of Arafura and the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The field research was 122
done under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation for the first year and the Australian National Research Council for the last two; without their generous financial assistance it could not have been attempted. I am indeed grateful. Part of the data has been published in certain of the scientific journals, to whom I offer my thanks for allowing me to republish that part of my material in its present form.

That this book is essentially a communal creation rather than the 000
work of an individual is clearly demonstrated to the author when he finally has completed his task. If the essential elements of genius could be analyzed I believe that a large proportion of the fundamental factors involved would be shorn from the so-called creator and given to his contemporary society. If this is partly true of genius it is almost wholly true of the ordinary fellow who does research in the social sciences and publishes his results as I have done in the pages that follow. In a sense, when I express my deep gratitude and my many obligations to those whose names are to be found in the next few paragraphs either for practical assistance which made the field work easier or because of their molding of the fundamentals of my thinking in the field of social anthropology, I am only partially recognizing their communal labor in creating this study of the North Australian aborigines.

My deepest obligation is to the Murngin people themselves, who gave me a fine, whole-hearted hospitality. I am particularly indebted to one of them, Mahkarolla, one of the finest men I have had the good luck to count among my friends. I sometimes wonder at the futility of so-called progress when I think of him.

I wish to thank my friend and first teacher, Robert H. Lowie, one of the few great American social anthropologists, for first taking in hand my rather difficult human material and molding out of it, if not

000 "origins." Accordingly, there have been within the last forty years a series of distinguished studies illuminating all phases of aboriginal activity.

In trying to assign to Professor Warner's book its rightful place among these publications, an Americanist cannot presume to speak with authority; he can merely voice impressions based on what he happens to know about the relevant literature and about the currents of thought which find expression in the present volume.

114 So far as I am aware, then, Professor Warner is the first to deal with amplitude of the structure and supernaturalism of a *tropical* Australian people. I am not forgetting the admirable *Bulletins of North Queensland Ethnography* issued by the late Dr. Walter E. Roth. But to Dr. Roth, as his subsequent and equally valuable South American researches indicate, technology was the most congenial aspect of culture and the one in which he especially excelled. As for Professor Spencer's work, his trips to the north country were relatively brief and their results accordingly do not rival in authoritativeness his important work on the central tribes. It seems to me, then, that this new book for the first time sets forth at length how a people regulated their society and ritual in the northern third of the island continent. It extends the perspective hitherto afforded, thereby enabling us to form a clearer notion of the range of ideas that find expression among the "blackfellows," to set off what is local from what is continental.

In his theoretical approach Professor Warner represents a novel fusion of ideas. He received his early anthropological training at the University of California and thus imbibed the brand of theory dispensed by Professor A. L. Kroeber and myself, respectively. I am not fond of catchwords, so I will not label it as "American." My conviction grows that there are nearly as many "American" points of view as there are American anthropologists; and that individual temperament and aptitude count for far more than does adherence to a scientific profession of faith. Classification into such a group seems in most instances a barren procedure. I, for example, am reckoned a conservative right-wing ethnographer in America, but have been described abroad both as a functionalist and as virtually a member of the *Kulturkreis* school. Yet I am not conscious of being a split personality. However this may be, in Berkeley Mr. Warner was exposed to the tenet that tribal contacts and chronological relations are matters of scientific concern; and this position was not foreign to his purposes when he reached the Murngin. Accordingly, there is here a summary of archaeological work, meager as its findings turned out to be. Far more significant is the discussion of Malay contacts. These had already been indicated in Ratzel's "Völkerkunde"; but it is the present author's merit to have discriminatingly reduced these alien influences to their proper proportion.

During the summer of 1926, Professor Bronislaw Malinowski lectured in Berkeley, and Mr. Warner was thus brought face to face with a consistently functionalist philosophy of culture. Soon Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown was able to afford him an opportunity to study in Australia some people still approximately living a life undebauched by white civilization, and the several years of field-work under his supervision gave Mr. Warner still another outlook on the subject. Specifically, it intensified a nascent devotion to kinship nomenclatures and introduced Mr. Warner to the French sociologists led by the late Professor Durkheim and nowadays most authoritatively represented by Professor Mauss.

These several influences explain the deviations of this treatise from the norm of monographs printed in this country. Much unquestionably coincides in aim with what trained ethnographers of whatever school would endeavor to secure. It also seems to me that the fruitful attempt to correlate specific aspects of Murngin culture with one another—as in the chapter on Warfare—is closely paralleled in general aim by Dr. A. H. Gayton's study of the interweaving of Yokuts shamanism and chieftaincy and by Dr. Cora Du Bois' recent demonstration of how the wealth concept integrates culture in southwestern Oregon. On the other hand, there is also in Professor Warner's approach a good deal that differs in organization and the statement of problems, in fact, in the very nature of the problems themselves. To these portions the reader's response will inevitably vary with his attitude toward the sociological philosophy from which the author has drawn his inspiration. It may, however, not be superfluous to add that, as the discussion of magic proves, he cannot be considered a servile follower of Durkheim. Altogether, American anthropology has in the past been preponderantly molded by British and German influences, and except on one or two writers sociology as a distinct discipline has been without discernible effect. The advent of a French--and, at that a sociological—flavor is thus not without piquancy.

Personally, I prefer to judge anthropological productions without reference to their author's "political" affiliations. Consequently, I will content myself with mentioning several features of this book that have appealed to me. I have already referred to the section on Malay-Murngin intercourse, which I am convinced is no mere sop to the historical-minded, but a recognition of the part played by contacts in the shaping of culture. From the sections on family and kinship I get a sharp picture of the workings of the Murngin system and from my more limited reading accept Professor Radcliffe-Brown's verdict that it embodies the clearest report available on Australian conditions. The description of supernaturalism brings out forcibly the patterns that shape it; and the definite way in which myth and ritual are related is striking and, indeed, surprising.

There seems to be here a solid mass of factual material that bears testimony to Professor Warner's zeal and skill as an observer, not to omit his obvious sympathy with his subjects. And anthropologists will eagerly watch the synthesis toward which the manifold trends that have molded his professional development are tending.

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that it was the same baby because of the child's resemblance to the one 775
that had died, which proved that the father's dream was true. 787

In 1898 Spencer and Gillen published their book, *Native Tribes of Central Australia,* 114 in which they declare, "We have amongst the Arunta, Luritcha and Ilparra tribes, and probably also among others, such as the Warramunga, the idea firmly held that the child is not the direct result of intercourse, that it may come without this, which merely, as it were, prepares the mother for the reception and birth also of an already formed spirit child who inhabits one of the local totem centers. Time after time we have questioned them on this point and always received the reply that the child was not the direct result of intercourse." This is in reference to the opin[illegible] among the natives of central and northern Australia there i[illegible]nowledge of physiological conception and that they believe impregnation of a woman to be entirely due to spiritual causes. Spencer and Gillen rather insisted on this fact because many of the whites of Australia believe that the natives practice the rite of subincision in the attempt to prevent conception. This operation is found throughout a large part of Australia; Spencer and Gillen rightly point out that it has nothing to do with birth control practices.

I was in very intimate contact with the Murngin natives. During 842
my first eight or nine months among them I was firmly convinced
that the people had no understanding of physiological conception and 123
believed in the spiritual impregnation of a woman by a totemic child 114
spirit. All the fathers told me their children had come to them in dreams as totemic souls, or in some extra-mundane experience, and asked that their mothers be pointed out to them. The men had complied with the request of the children, who had entered the vaginas of the mothers. During all this time, although I was in constant relationship with a large number of the men and there was practically no taboo on our conversations, which were of the most intimate nature, I could find no indication of any knowledge whatsoever of physiological conception; yet in the study I was making of the people, while looking at the problem from the point of view of the "total situation," that is, considering the whole of the culture, there were strong indications that the natives understood the true nature of the father's physical function.

The second time I entered the area I determined to go into this matter further, since the people I studied were but an extension of the central tribes on which Spencer and Gillen had reported. An occasion

123 arose in which I could inquire directly of certain old men just what
842 the semen did when it entered the uterus of a woman. They all looked at me with much contempt for my ignorance and informed me that
114 "that was what made babies." I had not been able to obtain this information earlier because the ordinary savage is far more interested in the child's spiritual conception, which determines its place in the social life of the people, than he is in the physiological mechanism of conception. He would far rather talk about ritual and myth than about ordinary mundane affairs. The relationship between the primitive men of northeastern Arnhem Land and me as a field worker would be the same as that between the colonial Puritans of Massachusetts and the traditional visitor from Mars. Had the latter asked Cotton Mather or any other member of the community "where babies came from," he would have discovered that they came from heaven, that God sent them, and that it was the special duty of the church to look out for them. He might have been told that the stork brought them, and discovered totemic "spiritual conception." He would have been told this for approximately the same reason that the ordinary anthropological field investigator is informed by the natives that the totemic spirit is what causes impregnation.

I know it is dangerous to assume that, because the tribes I studied knew about physiological conception, the people Spencer and Gillen investigated had similar knowledge. I do feel, though, the necessity of throwing doubt upon the validity of the conclusions reached by Spencer and Gillen and others who claim there is no knowledge of physiological conception among certain savage tribes. I think that possibly this knowledge does exist but is not considered important, the spiritual conception of the child looming so large in native thinking that the field worker obtains nothing but facts concerning the latter.[11]

745 When a man dies he goes straight to his narra well. He is taken there by his marikmo (paternal grandfather). He never comes back but always remains a spirit. Usually a Murngin who is about to die,
[763 particularly if severely wounded in a spear fight, dances his death
535] dance, which is symbolical of the ceremonial actions of his totem. This is to send his spirit back to his ranga well.

"We can drink that narra water; we can see the bottom of the well.

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[11] This point perhaps has been labored by me, but a large number of sociological and anthropological theories have been built out of the idea that there are many savage peoples who are ignorant of the facts of procreation. It is time some check be placed upon such speculation until further proof is accumulated by field workers.

"Murngin" (Wulamba) Social Organization

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121 IN RECENT years, the "Murngin" (Wulamba)[1] kinship system and social organization of northcentral and northeastern Arnhem Land, Northern Australia, have been the subject of much controversy and discussion among anthropologists: Warner (1930–31, 1937), followed by Lawrence and Murdock (1949), Radcliffe-Brown (1951, 1954), Lévi-Strauss (1949:216–46 *et seq.*; 1953:538–39, 543), and, recently, Leach (1951). In addition, various aspects have been discussed by Elkin (1933, 1950, 1953), Sharp (1934), Webb (1933), Berndt (1951), and Elkin, Berndt and Berndt (1950).

In this paper I do not intend to discuss this controversy, nor the Wulamba kinship system as such. These aspects will be treated in a more detailed paper to be published in the journal *Oceania*, in collaboration with Elkin. Here I will discuss specifically some significant features of this system of social organization, with particular reference to unilineal descent groups.[2]

114 On the whole, Radcliffe-Brown's (1951) criticism of Lawrence and Murdock's approach to Wulamba kinship was fully justified. He demonstrated that Warner's material was basically correct, while Lawrence and Murdock's argument rendered the whole system obscure and remote from real life. The material I worked through largely supports Radcliffe-Brown's contentions and agrees fundamentally with Warner's presentation. In addition, a number of further points are raised concerning structural implications, with most of which I am unable to deal here.

In the Wulamba asymmetrical system, based on marriage with a matri-
582 cross-cousin, the matrilineal and patrilineal descent lines may be diagrammed
601 in the manner adopted by Radcliffe-Brown (1951:46, Table III); see our
611 Table 1.[3] Patrilineal descent is shown vertically, with patri-lines traced from the F.F., M.M.B., M.F., F.M.B., respectively. "Matrilineal" descent is shown diagonally. Five generation levels are associated with seven vertical columns. These latter go in pairs. Column L-1 (to use Radcliffe-Brown's labeling) contains persons who are related to EGO by relationships reciprocal to those in which EGO stands to those in column R-1; the reciprocal of NGADI is GOMINJAR, of GALWAL, WAGU, and so on. The same is the case with L-2 and R-2, L-3 and R-3. These vertical columns signifying patri-lines of descent can be indefinitely extended: but those shown here are the basic lines significant to the Aborigines; and there must always be an uneven number of such patri-lines. The diagonal columns signifying "matri-lines" of descent correspond, in uneven numbers, with the patri-lines. The whole pattern, transferred from the kinship system itself, rests on the principle that (e.g.) males in patri-line O find their spouses in the right-hand column, while females of patri-line O find their spouses in the left-hand column.

inherited through his own patri-line. The MARI and the MARIMO as cult leaders may be of the same patri-line and of the same linguistic group. They may belong to two parallel patri-lines, in a range of parallel patri-lines of the same linguistic group. Or they may belong to two separate patri-lines of two separate ranges of parallel patri-lines, of different (but closely allied) linguistic groups within the same clan. 601 611

There is evidence to show that so close is the identification of EGO's patri-line headed by the MARIMO, and the M.M.B.'s line headed by the MARI, that people do not talk of the *marimobula*, but always of the *maribula*. And if there is some genealogical difference between MARIMO and MARI, as there may well be, it is the *babaru* and *maribula*, the latter being at the apex. In ritual life, in the handing down of the most sacred poles and soul bags, in bestowing sacred patterns like an insignia of power upon the initiand, in passing on relevant sections of sacred myth, religious dogmata, song cycles, "inside" words, invocations, personal names, magical power, and so on, the *maribula* is of equal, if not greater, importance than the *babaru*.

II. MATRILINEAL AND PATRILINEAL DESCENT

Now we, with Radcliffe-Brown, have called this the "matri-line" or the "line of matrilineal descent." There is, as we have seen, some measure of identification between MARI and MARIMO. Descent from the MARI runs diagonally from M.M.B. through the m. to her son; from the latter, whom we take as an EGO, through his sister's daughter to his Sr.D.S.: the *maribula* "flow" is linked through females who are siblings or mothers (m. and m.sr.) to EGO. Power and privilege received through the *maribula* do not go from MARI to Sr.S., but to the sr.d., who is the transmitter, to the MARI's Sr.D.S. The females, the MARI's sister, the M.B.'s sister, are agents in this transmission. Are we justified in calling this a "matri-line," or a "line of matrilineal descent"? Let us examine this more closely. Radcliffe-Brown's definition (1951:43) is unsatisfactory, and tells us nothing beyond the fact that a man is descended patrilineally, being followed by his son, and "matrilineally," being followed by his Sr.S. But in reality here a man is not followed by his Sr.S., but by his Sr.D.S. To view the diagonal lines of "matrilineal descent" in Radcliffe-Brown's way is to deny the significance of the *maribula* and the MARIMO-MARI identification. [114]

A. *Formation of the Patri-Line*. Let us first consider the formation of the patri-line. If we modify Fortes' definition of a lineage (1944:365-66; 1945:30) we are provided with a working framework. It is not a definition of a patri-line among the Wulamba, but it does help us to understand what we desire to show. Thus we can say that the patri-line spans a certain number of generation levels (in this case to the second ascending generation), and includes female siblings of the males of each generation level. But for the purpose of descent it is strictly agnatic and unilineal; females in this context do not, to any appreciable extent, inherit or transmit. Now this is the position of the *babaru* and the *maribula*, as with other lines of descent (all seven we have mentioned above, disallowing 611 person's association with this line is of a "submerged" nature, and rests on the division of labor between his father and his mother which resulted in his conception. It involves acknowledgment of a maternal blood tie. 611

The MARI-GUDARA line of inheritance is from M.M.B.'s patri-line to EGO's patri-line. Just as the wives of the males of EGO's patri-line come from his m.'s patri-line, so the *mari*'s of the males of EGO's patri-line are found in his M.M.B.'s patri-line.

Now these three lines are the most important to a person: the *baburu*, *maribula*, and *yandibula* (including NGADI). They are looked upon as being connected to one another by close consanguineal ties.

The "affinal" patri-lines of importance to an EGO are the *wagubula* (containing his Sr.S. and his patri-cross-cousin) and the *yadiwalgurabula* (containing his wife's MARI, and his own MARI's wife).

IV. NATURE OF DESCENT LINE

A. *Leach's Argument.* We must now turn to the problem of the nature of 114
this descent line. But before doing so, we must consider some remarks made 611
by Leach (1951:24–29, 31–34, 51–53). It is his contention "that the corporate 582
group of persons who have the decisive say in bringing about an arranged marriage is always a group of co-resident males representing, as a rule, three genealogical generations. . . ." Membership of such groups is defined by descent as well as residence. Thus his proposition is, "In a unilaterally defined descent system where a clan . . . ceases . . . to be a localized group, then, in general, it ceases to be a corporate unit for the purposes of arranging a marriage. The corporate group which does arrange a marriage is, in such circumstances, always a group of males who, beside being members of the same lineage or clan, share a common place of residence." These are local descent groups. Diagrammatic local descent groups are local lines: and the latter is distinguished from Radcliffe-Brown's descent line (1951:43). Descent lines, says Leach, have nothing to do with local grouping: the number of basic descent lines in a diagram relating to the kinship system depends upon how many different kinds of relative are recognized in the grandparents' generation. It has nothing to do with the number of local descent groups existing in the society. Failure to distinguish between these two notions has, says Leach, led to confusion. He says that "an important difference between these two is that the descent line comprises at least five generations; the local line considers three generations. . . ."

The problem before us is, then, to test this proposition and the usefulness [121]
of the concept "local descent group" or "local line." Leach considers that (e.g.) the type of cross-cousin marriage found among the Wulamba can usefully, for purposes of comparison, be treated as an institutional isolate. We agree with Leach's argument that the seven descent lines shown in Warner's work and by this paper are not actual segments of the total society. Lawrence and Murdock, as well as Lévi-Strauss, made this mistake and so inferred that the system was circular. We agree, then, with Radcliffe-Brown in insisting that

114 they are descent lines. But at the same time, Radcliffe-Brown failed to make 611 clear just what is the degree of correspondence between these descent lines and the local descent groups which constitute Wulamba society. Do we, however, agree with Leach's explanation?

Leach constructs a chart (1951:33, Fig. 7), which includes relatives genealogically related to EGO while he is a youth, i.e., those who are socially im- [616] portant to him as a young man. Warner's diagram is thus redrawn to show moiety arrangement. Leach calls the local descent groups CC, B, C, and CCC (see Table 1).

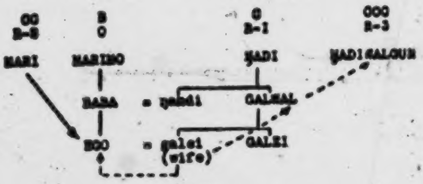
B, C, CC, and CCC are no longer descent lines but local descent groups: 582 B is allied to CC and balanced against C and CCC. B need not, but may, be 601 a part of CC. We may agree with Leach, who says that the MARI and 611 MARIMO cannot be the same person but they can be "clan" brothers. This 114 point has been noted above. The point in question is the "balance" between wife-givers and wife-receivers. What compensation does a group give when receiving a wife? Leach discusses the status superiority of GALWAL in relation to EGO, and of MARI to GALWAL. The argument is thus: B and CC are allies and stand in balanced opposition to C and CCC; taken in pairs there is an exchange of women. In this manner, although the status difference between "wife-givers" and "wife-receivers" is admitted, the over-all system is represented as one of equilibrium. The economic and status relations are considered the most important theme to be derived from Warner's study.

Now, reorganizing a certain section of Warner's diagram, as Leach has done, does not resolve the problems which he raised. The re-assembling of terms actually adds nothing further than facilitating access to material already latent in Warner's diagram. It tells us nothing more than what Warner has already said. The same number of individuals are accounted for: B and CC, and C and CCC, both belong to different moieties. If B and CC are identified as "brother" groups, as C and CCC may be, then an "exchange" of wives is assumed. Thus we can say that the MARIMO (B) receives as his wife a *momo* (C); he does not give his own sister in exchange (so to speak) to his *momo's* brother NGADI, but his "clan" brother MARI (CC) gives his sister (*mari*) to the NGADI (C) and he is thus compensated; the MARI (CC) is compensated by receiving the sister of the NGADI's clan brother, NGADIWALGUR (CCC). Now, who gives the latter a wife? In Leach's diagram a "clan" sister of CC goes to him, thus placing the local groups CC and B at a disadvantage, at least for the time being. There is not really a balance between "wife-receivers" and "wife-givers," and the over-all system (as explained by Leach) is not one of equilibrium. For equilibrium to be attained, the NGADIWALGUR should receive a wife who is the MARIMO's sister, as compensation for having given his own sister to MARI (a "clan" brother of MARIMO) as wife. But NGADIWALGUR marries a "clan" sister (or actual sister) of MARI, while MARIMO's sister marries a GOMINJAR, who may be equated with a NGADI. But need there be absolute equilibrium? And if there is, need it be achieved in one generation, i.e., in the generation of EGO's grandparents? Leach's analysis of this section of Warner's system omits consideration of EGO's 114 sister's position, and does not take into account the compensatory factors in- 582 volved in EGO's own marriage. To understand equilibrium (or for that matter 601 disequilibrium) in a kinship system of this kind, to understand the ramification 611 of compensatory factors, we must consider EGO as an adult, for it is his child-producing potentiality which is important.

B. *Asymmetrical Nature of System.* When an EGO marries, certain individuals become involved. For discussion we may diagram as in Table 2, on the basis of Leach.

That is, EGO receives a wife from C group. His group B (i.e., all members of 582 it), with his MARI group (principally his own MARI), i.e., CC, aid him in 583 accumulating gifts which will be given to C group. These gifts go principally 601 602 611 into the hands of EGO's wife's father. A division is then made by this GALWAL, who gives presents to the group of his daughter's MARI (the NGADIWALGUR, CCC), who is incidentally his own W.M.B. and of the line of his own MARI; the remaining goods are distributed throughout the GALWAL's *babaru.*

TABLE 2



When EGO's sister marries, certain individuals become involved: the same principle is involved here as above.

On a wider range, the compensatory factors involved can be diagrammed 583 (see Table 3). As one may see by a glance at this diagram, the distribution of 601 goods and services (in the form of reciprocal duties) between persons within 602 the two moieties which contain the local groups is unequal. (I am not consider- 611 ing here the question of intangibles.) The only way in which they might be 616 regarded as equal would be to classify all the groups of one moiety as against all the groups of the opposite moiety. Now this may be done in practice, so that any inequalities are wiped out.

What is, however, revealed by Table 3 is the chain of duties which links a man with his MARI, his obligations to his wife's F., and the latter's to his daughter's MARI. That is to say, the main principle, which is simple enough, and which governs the system, is that the MARI, as the most important of all EGO's relatives, because of the emotional bond existing between the two, because of his general identification with EGO's own patri-line, aids his grandson (his Sr.D.S.) upon his betrothal; but he does not aid his sr.d.d., for through her (EGO's sister) he receives his compensation. A M.B. receives compensation

Male siblings of any generation may segment with their descendants: this is 613
particularly the case with male siblings of the second and third ascending
generation levels. Actual relationship between members of these parallel groups [601]
tends to be somewhat vaguely conceived after the second generation, when use
may be made of classificatory terminology considered to be more or less
accurate. Each parallel group tends, too, to be more or less of the same size. [582]
The linguistic group signifying its maximal range is exogamous. Now, in my
opinion the linguistic group could be treated as a lineage: but our labeling it
a lineage would depend on our definition.

It may be possible to view the *babaru* as the effective nuclear lineage, conforming with Fortes' definition (1949:9): thus each "segment" would be an effective nuclear lineage which in toto (and in parallel linkage) would form the wider lineage or linguistic group. But our definition of lineage would have to be made, not only in terms of genealogically traceable male relatives, but also by allowing some coverage of classificatory male relatives who are viewed as belonging to a common unilineal descent group—which is exactly what the linguistic group is.

G. *Nature of Linguistic Group and Clan.* Each descent group is the *babaru;*
it forms the basis for the expanded family, spread across the parallel descent
groups within the linguistic group. All male members of the *babaru* have a
common interest and a sense of belonging to a common stretch of country, of
sharing a common sacred background. The head of the *babaru* will be the
MARIMO, and it is upon his decision (usually) that fights and feuds are be-
gun, continued, and terminated: he is, more or less, the jural head of his group. [621]
As we have seen, several of such groups form the linguistic group, which means
that such parallel groups not only occupy the same ground, hunt together, join [197]
in sacred ceremonies together, and so on, but also speak a common dialect
which distinguishes them from other linguistic groups. As a linguistic group,
these parallel descent groups have in common sacred emblems, songs, sections
of mythology, and patterns or totemic designs.

Now, it is true that, as Leach has remarked (1951:25), "The number of 114
basic descent lines in such a diagram [i.e., the kinship system set out diagram- 601
matically] depends merely upon how many different kinds of relative are 611
recognized in the grandfather's generation. It has nothing to do with the num- 613
ber of local descent groups existing in the society." But the classification of
such a system into seven basic and secondary patri-lines that symbolize local
descent groups is an indication that a categorization takes place. This cate-
gorization is an abstract, so to speak, of what actually occurs. It is nothing so
rigid as seven "watertight" groups; but what is inferred is a scattering of con-
sanguineal and affinal relatives, throughout a number of linguistic groups. It
symbolizes range.

Within the parallel groups forming a linguistic group one finds all kin who 601
are actual and classificatory F.F., F., S., and so on. One might also conceivably 613
find a scattering of relatives who belong to the patri-line of one's MARI, 614
assuming the close identification of MARI with MARIMO. But usually the

ritual occasions. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding their binding ritual and 613 economic obligations, the descent group as such is the only unit to which one may turn to obtain aid which will be given more or less automatically.

As Leach has said (1951:53), "the network of kinship relations embraces 197 a great number of local groups [corporate descent groups] and ties them into a kind of loosely knit political system; but throughout the population so linked 613 there is no strong sense of social solidarity and in some cases there are even 619 wide differences of language [as among the linguistic groups] and culture [not [184] in this case, however] between different parts of the one system." That is to say, the usual characteristics of tribal organization are lacking; and it is for that reason that these people of eastern Arnhem Land belong to what I have called the Wulamba bloc, speaking a number of related dialects of one language which in toto are referred to as Miwoidj.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The Wulamba material carries a number of general theoretical implications. 114 These concern primarily, in this context, the corporate or unilineal descent 583 group. The marginal propositions discussed by Leach (1951:52–53) mainly 606 refer to the question of relationship between wife-givers and wife-receivers, and the differentiation of status. These arguments regarding the relevance of status concepts to the analysis of "bride-price" (i.e., bride-wealth) and dowry have not been followed up to any extent here. The status concepts which do 554 exist in Wulamba social life, and are reflected in their kinship system, are those dependent on seniority and reinforced by ritual and sacred ceremony. Other factors linked with status considerations are the prestige attaching to fighting ability, to proficiency in magic, and to parenthood as such. Status derived from these sources need not coincide with ritual and ceremonial status, nor with status associated with seniority in a descent group or a linguistic group. Nevertheless, discussion of all these features would be relevant in any detailed study of kinship and social organization (see Sharp 1934:418–20). But status 554 dependent on being a "wife-receiver" or "wife-giver" is to my mind not relevant. A man's status is not necessarily derived from or enhanced by his being 606 a "wife-giver." It so happens that the "wife-giver" will be socially "superior" (although the term "superior" has connotations which I do not think are applicable here), but he is possessed of this status whether or not he accedes to [the expectation that he will give his daughter to his Sr.S. I admit, however, 114] with Leach, that a more detailed analysis is necessary of the economic aspects of the effects of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. As he states [582 (1951:45), "the reciprocities of kinship obligation are not merely symbols of 583] alliance, they are also economic transactions, political transactions, charters to rights of domicile and land use."[6]

Leach points out that when Kachin-type marriage (and presumably Wu- 114 lamba marriage) occurs—i.e., matrilateral cross-cousin marriage—it is part of the political structure. Now this may certainly be the case among the Kachin, or among certain African groups, but is it the case among the Wulamba? Our

114 acceptance of this aspect will depend on our definition of political structure
and its relevance in northeastern Arnhem Land. It is beyond our scope here
to discuss this aspect in detail. If, as Radcliffe-Brown has said (1950:xiv),
when we are dealing with political systems we are dealing with law on the one
hand, and with war on the other, then for the Wulamba we must define what
these two concepts mean. Or again, Radcliffe-Brown has shown that in seeking
to define the political structure among the Australian Aborigines, we must
consider the territorial community which is united by the rule of law. Is this
political community among the Wulamba indeterminate? Thus in such a
society the political structure concerns the grouping together of individuals
within a territorial framework—a separation of group from group within the
total system, which may be described in terms of war, feud, and the exercise
of recognized authority in settling disputes, and so on. This would of course
involve some differentiation of social rôle between persons and between classes
of persons. As Radcliffe-Brown has pointed out (1950:xx, xxi), in an area such
as the Wulamba, this would involve differentiation on the basis of sex and age
and the noninstitutionalized recognition of leadership in ritual, in hunting, in
619 warfare and in craft-specialization, and so on. We may say with Warner (1937)
and Leach (1951:53), as I have already mentioned above, that a number of
local groups (or corporate or unilineal descent groups) are tied together in a
network of kinship, forming a loosely knit political system. For this means in
effect that we have the minimal and maximal corporate descent groups, linking
in parallel fashion to form a linguistic group, several of the latter forming a
clan and all clans being linked in a cultural and social bloc which I have called
the Wulamba. Nevertheless, there is no real political solidarity, as we understand
it above, among the peoples so linked. There is, however, a loosely conceived
613 political solidarity among those parallel descent groups forming the
619 linguistic group. And that such groups are closely linked in kinship is obvious
from what we have said. Many questions could be raised at this juncture
concerning concepts of common action in feud and fighting and in the maintenance
of law in this context. But again, without considering this in detail,
we must say that the linguistic group does not act as one, however closely associated
and intimately connected its members may be, scattered among the
parallel descent groups, even though they occupy a common, acknowledged,
territory and engage together in common ceremonies, belong to the one moiety,
speak the one language (or dialect), possess the one sacred emblems and patterns,
[621] invocations, and so on. They are the common residential unit; but the
political unit, if we may call it that, is the corporate unilineal descent group in
its maximal span. A series (two, three, or more) of these political units in parallel
fashion form the linguistic group; but political autonomy rests upon each of
these units. At this juncture let me discuss briefly the function of such a corporate
unilineal descent group. We have already mentioned some of its features,
but now we must elaborate its corporate activities in order to justify its
being termed a political unit, and to enable us to discuss it in relation to the
generalizations indicated by Fortes (1953:24).

613 171 The point arises here as to whether corporate descent groups of a unilineal nature are common in Australia. They have not been discussed for elsewhere, and the issue remains for empirical investigation. I would suggest that they are present. Take, for example, the vague concept of horde, as a wandering food-collecting group. This consists normally of a small group of men bound together by common descent, plus their wives. Without the latter this is usually of composition similar to that of the unilineal descent group. A great deal has been written, too, of the local group: this material needs re-analysis, in light of some of the problems raised here.[8]

182 428 591 We may now consider some of the general propositions relating to the structure of the unilineal descent group, and its place in the total social system, as put forward by Fortes. These aspects, he tells us, hold for both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

613 Forde (1947) has discussed the emergence of such descent groups. It is assumed by him, and Lowie (1921), "that unilineal descent groups are not of significance among peoples who live in small groups, depend on a rudimentary technology, and have little durable property" (Fortes 1953:24). Now this is entirely relevant to our material and assumptions, for the descent group we discuss in this paper occurs among an Aboriginal Australian people who, we may assume, conform with the stipulations laid down for the nonsignificance of this group. If we find the unilineal descent group present in this particular situation, we may assume that we will find a strongly emphasized system of transmission of property rights and type of residence after marriage. In the former case, if we consider ritual, songs, invocations, emblems, patterns, and so on as inherited from father to son, with the oblique inheritance of the MARI-GUDARA line, reinforcing patriliny; and in the latter, the importance of patrilocal residence, with its implications relating to the spirit-conception center, these might well be significant reasons for their emergence. A poorly developed technology, and the virtual absence of durable property, are surely not critical factors governing emergence or nonemergence of such groups.

613 121 114 Now I assume from Fortes' (1953:25), "the most important feature of unilineal descent groups in Africa [e.g.] . . . is their corporate organization," that he would regard a group of this kind as a lineage. But can we regard the corporate unilineal descent group discussed in this paper as a lineage? This question I have suggested in the main body of my discussion. I said that each *babaru* could be viewed as a segment, while the parallel linked *babaru*, in toto, could be viewed as an effective lineage. That is to say, we would be considering the linguistic group as the lineage, segmented into effective unilineal descent groups, each of a corporate nature. But this is not a particularly satisfactory position. The question thus arises whether perhaps we can acknowledge the existence of this corporate descent group without considering it a lineage. This, of course, would lead to a more rigid definition of a lineage, when its depth and span would have to be considered.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that for Fortes (1953:25–26) the unilineal corporate descent group is a lineage: "the way this works depends on the kind of

legal institutions found in the society—and this is a function of political organization." 114
The more we consider the question of lineage structure, the less we are 121
willing to classify the corporate descent group of Wulamba type as a lineage.
There are, however, striking similarities. For example, writes Fortes (1953:26), 613
"where the lineage is found as a corporate group all the members of a lineage
are to outsiders jurally equal and represent the lineage when they exercise
legal and political rights and duties in relation to society at large." Thus among 602
the Wulamba the corporate descent group, the *babaru*, will be viewed, in toto, 613
by different outsiders as a *maribula*, a *gadjiwalgurabula*, *wagubula*, *gandibula*,
gudarabula, and so on, depending on what type of relative is found there. "My
mother comes from there," or "My sister's son comes from there"—thus those
people are "my *gandibula*" or "my *wagubula*." All the people within that group
will be conveniently classified as "those of my *gandibula*" and so on: all are
equally classed with "my mother" or "sister's son," as the case may be,
although terminological differences between certain individuals within the
group are recognized. But all are held responsible for the actions of any individual within. [672]
There is thus a collective responsibility in blood vengeance
and in feud, or in running the gauntlet in a *magarada* "peace ceremony." This [628]
is thus a function of the Wulamba descent group, as well as, apparently, of
the lineage (p. 26).

However, an aspect which demarcates the Wulamba descent group from 114
the lineage is the latter's presumed perpetuity in time. Fortes (p. 27) discusses 613
its continuity, which means its perpetual structural existence—the perpetuation
of defined rights, duties, offices, social tasks, and so on, vested in the
lineage as a corporate unit. Among the Wulamba, as we have seen, genealogical [601]
memory is short. The greatest span of any descent line is five to six generations. [611]
But segmentation occurs at any point, so that a number of parallel descent
groups are ranged to form a linguistic group, and genealogical connections between them may not always be accurately stipulated. Nevertheless, within the range of the parallel descent groups we find the perpetuation of defined rights which will be primarily of a ritual order, and relating to rights over patterns and emblems, dances, songs, myth sections, and so on; also rights to hunt a particular natural species; rights to make certain kinds of bags; and, sometimes, but rarely, specified tasks like canoe-making, or prerogatives concerning stone-ax and stone-blade quarries, deposits of ochre, and so on. This again raises some interesting questions, highly relevant to our concept of lineage and descent group alike.

It is true, too, as Fortes has mentioned (p. 29) that the descent group must be studied as a part of the total social system. He considers that the main methodological contribution to such studies has been the approach from the angle of political organization (p. 30). Whether this can be done for the Wulamba descent groups remains to be seen. Or again, that descent is fundamentally a jural concept (Radcliffe-Brown 1952): we see, says Fortes (1953:30), "its significance, as the connecting link between the external, that is political and legal, aspect of what we have called unilineal descent groups,

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
OI17 Murngin OI17

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and the internal or domestic aspects." In the latter context kinship carries maximum weight; among the Wulamba there is more or less equal balance between these two features. The corporate body as such, among the Wulamba, is based on kinship.

As Fortes has pointed out (1953:31), when lineage structure is discussed it is considered "from a particular analytical angle, with the organization of jural, economic, and ritual activities." It is on this aspect that we require more detailed consideration in relation to the descent group among the Wulamba. This is the case, too, with the structure of authority mentioned by Fortes (p. 32), for a lineage as a corporate group. Each Wulamba descent group has an acknowledged head, an elder to whom all within his group look up. He, in conjunction with elders of other parallel groups forming the linguistic group, has special ritual duties and power: his authority is reinforced by ritual sanctions. It would seem, then, that a more detailed analysis of the significance of the descent group in Arnhem Land religious life would be a rewarding avenue of investigation.

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In these last few paragraphs my purpose has been only to consider the corporate unilineal descent group (as found among the Wulamba) in relation to what Fortes has termed the lineage. It (i.e., the unilineal descent group) is for him the basic determinant of lineage structure. If that is so, we can legitimately mention some of his broad generalizations in relation to our concept. Further, we have not deliberately tried to show that the descent group as present in northeastern Arnhem Land social structure is, or may be, equated with a lineage. But there are points of comparison between these two separate, but similar, concepts. These aspects of compatibility we have indicated, and they are propositions for further empirical testing.

NOTES

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[1] I have preferred the term used by the people themselves: they are the Wulamba, which refers collectively to all their clans; that is, they may be said to be the Wulamba bloc. The varying dialects are collectively known as Miwoldj. Warner (1937) erroneously used the term "Murngin," which is the name of only one clan and should not be used in this sense.

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[2] The material presented here was obtained at Milingimbi in 1950; short periods of work had previously been spent there, in 1946 and 1947. More intensive field work was carried out in 1946–47 within the vicinity of Yirrkalla, northeastern Arnhem Land. The initial period of research was carried out under the Australian National Research Council, the latter under the Research Committee of the University of Sydney: both were under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney. The writer wishes to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Professor A. P. Elkin of that Department. This paper was written under a Nuffield Foundation Dominion Fellowship, in London. It was presented in part and discussed at a seminar on kinship theory at the London School of Economics.

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[3] The kinship terms used in this paper are in their Anglicized equivalents: these differ in some cases from those used by Warner and Radcliffe-Brown. For instance, *marikmo* is *marimo*; *yeppa, jaba*; *maraitcha, maraidja*; *mareiker, maralgur*; *kutara, gudara*; *mali, gadi*; *gawel, gawal*; *arndi*; *gandi*; *galle, galei*; *due, duwei*; *natjiwalker, gadiwalgur*; *kaminyer, gaminjar*; etc. Terms in capitals denote males.

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[4] The approximate population of Arnhem Land is 4,000; 1,500 to 2,000 possibly belonging to the Wulamba bloc.

[5] I would not say, however, that Thomson's material (1949) on ceremonial economic exchange 114
fills many gaps, if any, in Warner's data (see Leach 1951:34). It is obvious, I think, both from his
material and from ours, that exchanges of this nature between M.B. and Sr.S. comprise merely 438
one element in a wide system of economic exchanges. Goods travel backwards and forwards 439
through the network of cognatic relationships, against a background of linked and allied linguistic
groups, in a traditionally prescribed fashion, between certain specified kin, passing outside the 182
periphery of the Wulamba bloc into and from alien Aboriginal or European (or Indonesian, as 602
before) channels. Such exchanges consist of specified objects or commodities, which move in dif-
ferent directions across the surface of the whole country; but this is only one aspect relevant to
the total kinship system.

Also, I would agree with Leach (p. 52) that in a marriage exchange the equivalent of a woman 114
is not only another woman, and that the equivalent of a woman may be found not only in goods
and labor and symbolic objects. Certain intangibles can play a part—and these may involve 582
prestige, rights, services, and perhaps status. Little work, as yet, has been done in consideration of 583
these. Reciprocal exchanges between males and females, or between females, should also be dis-
cussed in much greater detail, for these are not just reflections of exchanges between male partners. 602
It is not satisfactory to consider an EGO as being always a male, as has been done in most discus-
sions of kinship systems. Where prestations occur between male and female kin, these seem to
conform with traditional patterns; but between female kin (i.e., among the Wulamba), this is not
so apparent.

[6] Radcliffe-Brown (1931:4-5) calls the local group a horde: he states that each horde is inde- 114
pendent and autonomous, managing its own affairs and acting as a unit in its relations with other
hordes (however, see pp. 28, 106). Elkin (1938:39-41, 73-74) discusses the local group: it is, he 613
tells us, an enlarged family, consisting of a man and his living descendants in the male line; such 621
a group can be a local patrilineal clan. Elkin then draws a distinction between the local group and
the horde, which is as we have defined it above. In fact his statements would, I think, agree with
our own here.

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West in Tasmania, both in appearance and design.[7] It is possible that the soft rock in both places has allowed the use of similar techniques. In the caves of the River Murray, and in the ranges of South Australia and western New South Wales, are scattered groups of cave paintings.[8] Although in these caves there are many naturalistic figures, the curvilinear abstract forms, similar to those of the rock engravings, are present in equal numbers.

New South Wales has three distinct art forms within its boundaries, rock engravings and cave paintings on the western section, carved trees, commonest in central New South Wales, and rock engravings of the Hawkesbury River basin.

The carved trees extend over a large part of New South Wales and southern Queensland, extending from the Shoalhaven River in the south, to the Tweed River in Queensland, and westward as far as Bourke, on the River Darling.[9] While we know nothing of the purpose of the forms of art already mentioned, we do know, from the writings of early settlers, that these carved trees were used for two purposes. Some were associated with the *bora* (initiation) ceremony, and others with the burial rituals. The living trees were carved with designs, sometimes as long as nine feet, made up of an interesting combination of diamonds, circles, spirals, and other curvilinear patterns; the human figure was seldom used. The labour of cutting these complex designs into the large number of tree-trunks required for a *bora* ground must have been considerable. Black[10] records that there are still over eighty carved trees standing at the Bannaway *bora* ground on the Barwon River.

The aborigines of the Hawkesbury River basin developed an art form which consisted largely of huge outline engravings[11] of human beings, fish, animals, birds and reptiles cut in the soft sandstone. The sea-creatures predominate (as is to be expected on a sea-coast), some of them reaching a length of sixty feet, and there are numerous examples of kangaroos up to twenty-two feet, human beings fifteen feet, and emus thirteen feet long. These large engravings were cut in the soft sandstone either with a sharp-pointed stone tool, or by drilling a series of holes, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, along the outline of the design, after which the intervening sections were broken or rubbed down. As with the rock engravings of Tasmania and South Australia, and the designs on the carved trees of New South Wales, we have no evidence from the aborigines themselves either of the meanings of these engraved figures, or of the mythology associated with them. The artists who produced these remarkable engravings, and the aborigines who knew their meanings, died many years before we became sufficiently interested to inquire about their art.[12]

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[7] Luckman (1950), Pl. 1-8.

[8] Black (1943).

[9] Etheridge, Junr. (1918), Pl. 39; Black (1941), p. 25.

[10] Black (1941), p. 34.

[11] Campbell (1899).

[114]

[12] In recent years, some workers are placing their own interpretations on the more abstract of these figures. As such interpretations could not have been obtained directly from the aboriginal who produced them, nor from any aboriginal who has seen them produced, and as there are no references in early literature about the meaning of these figures, as given by aboriginal artists, such interpretations should be accepted with considerable reserve.

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THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

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DURING THE EIGHT weeks the expedition camped at Yirrkalla[1] my research was concentrated on bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and their associated myths.

F. M. Setzler and F. D. McCarthy, while engaged on archaeological research at Milingimbi, collected several painted ceremonial objects from that locality. The Rev. Arthur F. Ellemor also arranged for the aborigines of Milingimbi to make a number of bark paintings for me. These objects and bark paintings from Milingimbi are valuable because they indicate little change in the art forms over north-eastern Arnhem Land. Setzler and McCarthy also assisted me in the interpretation of some of the Yirrkalla bark paintings.

When I returned to Yirrkalla for a short period during 1952 I was able to check the work of other investigators as well as my own. As the art forms of both Yirrkalla and Milingimbi are similar they will be treated as one unit from north-east Arnhem Land.

Barrett[2] figured cave paintings from the Wessel Islands, as well as fish and animals which the aboriginal children moulded in the sand. The Berndts[3] described a series of sacred carved figures from Yirrkalla and later[4] another series of secular carved figures from the same area; they[5] also published a myth of the moon and the words of the song belonging to it. Elkin and the Berndts[6] described a number of bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and ceremonial objects. It is, however, from Warner's[7] descriptions and analyses of the culture of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land that we have learned so much about the mythology, philosophy, social organization and the clan and language groups of north-eastern Arnhem Land. Thomson[8] has described the movement of goods and the trade cycles of eastern Arnhem Land.

1. BARK PAINTINGS, DECORATED OBJECTS AND MYTHS

(1) HUMAN BEINGS

The Man, Djunkgao

Among the aborigines of Arnhem Land the myths of the *Wawalik* sisters and of the *Djunkgao* form the bases of all the important ceremonies, the myth of the *Wawalik* for the *gunabibi*, *ulmark*, *djungguan* and *marndiella* rituals, and the myth of *Djunkgao* for the *dua* and *jiritja narra* rituals.[9] 773* 796

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[1] Map. Fig. 1.
[2] Barrett and Croll (1943), p. 70.
[3] Berndt (1948), pp. 309-26.
[4] Berndt (1949), pp. 213-20. Pl. 1-3.
[5] Berndt (1948a), pp. 17-50.
[6] Elkin and the Berndts (1950).
[7] Warner (1937).
[8] Thomson (1949).
[9] Warner (1937), p. 241.

[pp. 16-266 not processed]

women. In my collections of bark paintings there is, fortunately, a series dealing with the *Djunkgao* myth, which is associated with localities extending from Port Bradshaw, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, to Goulburn Island on the north coast. These paintings show a gradual shift from male to female dominance as the myth moves westward. 773* 776 184

At Jelangbara, near Port Bradshaw, where *Djunkgao*[10] and his sister first landed, it was *Djunkgao* with his digging sticks who created most of the waterholes and topography, his sister being relatively unimportant. At Arnhem Bay[11] some thirty miles westward, although *Djunkgao* created the waterholes, he was under the dominance of his sister, *Madalait*. About fifty miles west of Arnhem Bay, and south of Elcho Island, is a sacred waterhole, Milmigarak, which was created by the *Djunkgao*, who by then had become two sisters, instead of brother and sister. Some elements of the *Wawalik* myth are incorporated in this one.[12] In the *Djunkgao* myths of the Milingimbi area, recorded by Warner,[13] the *Djunkgao* are two important female ancestors who named the animals, plants and birds, and created many sacred waterholes. [778]

As most of the bark paintings dealing with *Djunkgao* have separate myths, each painting will be described in association with the relevant myth.

Djunkgao and Madalait at Port Bradshaw

The myths associated with this collection of bark paintings, carved figures and ceremonial objects deal with both the arrival of *Djunkgao* and his sister *Madalait* at Port Bradshaw[14] and the origin of some of the totemic designs of the *riredjingu* language (*mata*) group associated with the *Djunkgao* at Port Bradshaw. 773*

In early *bumun* (creation) times *Djunkgao*, his wife *Walo*, the sun-woman[15] their daughter, *Bara-bararinja* and *Madalait*, his sister, lived at Tjurinjina, a place far across the water to the east of Yirrkalla.[16]

One day *Djunkgao*, having decided to go on a journey to Port Bradshaw, set out in his bark canoe, taking his sister with him, but leaving his wife, the sun

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[10] Myth, p. 273. [11] Myth, p. 275. [12] Myth, p. 275.

[13] Warner (1937), p. 336.

[14] The carved figures and ceremonial objects are described in Part 5.

[15] Berndt (1952), p. 3, states that the Djanggawul [*Djunkgao*] people were closely associated with the sun. One myth tells that the sun had two daughters who later became the *Djunkgao* sisters. In the myth of the sun, p. 502, which I collected in association with the relevant bark painting, Pl. 85E, the sun-woman, *Walo*, was the wife of *Djunkgao*. Their home was not at Purelko (Berndt's Bralku or Bralgu), but at Tjurinjina, some distance beyond.

[16] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 28, state that Djanggewul [Warner's and my *Djunkgao*], his two sisters, Maralaitj [my *Madalait*] and Pildjiwuraroiju, and a companion, Beralberal, came from Bralku [Warner's and my Purelko]. Later Berndt (1952), p. 2, corrects this statement and records that the party 'came from a far distant country, and on their way to the Arnhem Land mainland stopped at Bralgu [Purelko], the *dua* moiety island of the dead.' [114]

My aboriginal informants were definite that the *Djunkgao* party came, not from Purelko, the *dua* 'heaven', but from Tjurinjina which, although it lies in the same general direction as Purelko, is not the same place. This statement, and Berndt's later correction, are important because they dispose of the evidence that an important mythical ancestor originated in the home of the dead, evidence which might give rise to a theory that the aborigines of Yirrkalla believe in reincarnation. [775]

(8) The Art of Milingimbi

The Rev. Arthur F. Ellemor made a small collection of Milingimbi bark 532*
paintings for the expedition, together with simple but incomplete interpretations. 184
This collection was valuable because it shows that the art of Milingimbi, on the [114]
west of north-eastern Arnhem Land, and that of Yirrkalla on the east, are similar
both in design and mythological content.

778*

The Wild Honey, Koko

532*

The honey of the stingless bee is one of the few sweet foods in the aborigines' 222
menu. Many hours are spent searching for this food and a great deal of labour [262
expended climbing the trees and cutting out the hives. Four bark paintings[66] 481]
were collected dealing with the mythical wild-honey ancestors of Milingimbi.

Plate 125C is associated with a mythical wild-honey woman, called *Birikuru*, whose camp was on the mainland south of Elcho Island. This site is a totemic place of the wild honey, *koko*. The painting is a conventionalized representation of a hive of wild bees, the projection from the upper edge being the 'nose' or entrance to the hive, and the central disc, the beeswax. The cross-hatched diamond-shaped patterns covering the bulk of the painting represent the honey comb, the white lines forming the margins of the various cells, the beeswax, and the dotted diamonds the eggs and young bees in the nursery cells.

Plate 125A is another painting of a hive of wild honey. The symbolism is similar to that in C, except that the artist has shown four entrances to the hive.

Plate 125D pictures *koko's* totemic place at Murnarambul, near Arnhem Bay. The three transverse panels, *a, a, a,* and the vertical cross-hatched one, *b,* refer to logs lying on the ground near Murnarambul, in which there are hives of wild bees. Within the design made by these four logs are hives of wild bees. These hives are pictured with the same symbols as those in A and C, the two long triangular projections at the top of the painting being entrances to the hive.

Plate 125B is another painting of a hive of wild bees, using the traditional symbolism to show the wax, honey, eggs and young bees. The long rectangular design in the middle of the bark painting is a hollow tree in which there is a hive of bees, the honey and comb. The hive is again shown at the bottom of the central panel. The entrance or nose of the hive is a long tapering design at the top. The side panels illustrate two more hives.

Mimala, the Fresh-water Tortoise

Plate 126A pictures a forest area near Arnhem Bay, called Jaraga, the totem 532*
place of the mythical fresh-water tortoise, *mimala*.[67] Three of these tortoises are [778]
shown at the top of the painting, the designs on each carapace representing the water-grass often growing on the backs of these creatures. The three dark-coloured vertical lines, *a, a, a,* are logs and the four panels of diamond-shaped

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[66] These designs are similar to those of the *dalwongu mata*, Fig. 64J.

[67] *Mimala,* the fresh-water tortoise, is also pictured on an engraved smoking pipe, Fig. 59D; on a painted coffin, Pl. 105B; and on another bark painting, Pl. 119A.

seashore, usually with the points of their fingers. Some of the children were particularly dexterous. Plate 91C is a sand drawing of a goanna and Pl. 91D a moulded figure of a fish. 532* 857

In Central Australia, I often saw the aboriginal children drawing simple figures on the sides of the drifting sand-hills. Barrett and Croll[2] illustrate figures of dugongs, sharks, crocodiles and even a lugger in sail, which the aborigines of the Wessel Islands had scooped in the sand. [171]

5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

61 621 114

The social organization of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land dominates every aspect of their social, ceremonial, philosophical and cultural life.

Warner[3] published a list of the clans (which we now call *mala*), the high and low totems of each clan, the language groups (*mata*) and the names of the totemic waterholes. This list is by far the most valuable information we have on the subject. Warner,[4] however, although obviously puzzled about the matter, made the mistake of grouping the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land into tribes instead of clans, failing to recognize that the clan was the most powerful unit.

Thomson,[5] when referring to the same social organization, pointed out Warner's mistake, and at the same time defined the word *malla* (my *mala*) as referring to a strong patrilineal group linked together by the same totemic ancestors. Elkin and the Berndts[6] list some of the *dua* and *jiritja* clans (*mala*) and language groups (*mata*). I also was able to obtain additional data on the subject. Nevertheless, our knowledge of the *malas* and *matas* is still very incomplete.

As my research on the art of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land developed, however, it became evident that the effects of this social organization was as powerful in the realms of pictorial art as it is in other aspects of their culture. I found that aborigines who had totemic ancestors in common were using designs on their bark paintings and other art objects which were unlike those employed by men of different clan affiliations. Inquiries also revealed that many, perhaps all, of these designs, the property of any particular language group or *mata*, had been handed down to them by one or another of their mythical totemic ancestors.[7] 532* 61 [128]

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[2] Barrett and Croll (1943), Pl. 71, facing p. 76.

[3] Warner (1937), pp. 39-51.

[4] Warner (1937), p. 35, writes: 'The tribes of northeastern Arnhem Land . . . are very weak social units, and when measured by the ordinary definitions of what constitutes a tribe fail almost completely.'

[5] Thomson (1949), p. 11.

[6] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 23.

[7] For origin of designs see myths of *Nguru-gujameri* and the *gunjun* crab design, p. 298; *Banaitja* and the *jiritja* designs, p. 291; *borodji* the snake, and other *jiritja* designs, p. 369; *Djunkgao* and the light on the waves, the rising sun and the parallel lines of sand-hills, p. 273.

more expert they experimented with the carved figures until at the present time 532*
they are able to produce a creditable representation of the human form (see
Pl. 135A, B).

From that time until comparatively recently the *jiritja*[18] men adopted the 764
Macassan custom of using carved grave posts, but only when the body was buried 616
instead of being placed on a platform. When a *jiritja* man died, his moiety asked
a *dua* man to carve a mortuary post to place on the grave.[19] Later, when the 532*
body was disinterred and the burial dances were being performed a *jiritja* man,
taking the mortuary post with him, went from camp to camp collecting food for
the participants in the burial rituals.[20] At the completion of the meal the post
was replaced on the empty grave.

The chief interest of the carved human figures lies in the fact that in a little 532*
over two generations the aborigines, without the help and for most of the time 177
without even the knowledge of the white man, have taken a simple post figure
of foreign origin and through improvement of techniques can now carve in wood
heads and full-length human figures of considerable merit.

The Rev. F. W. Chaseling, when a missionary at Yirrkalla, was the first to 532*
discover that the aborigines of that locality were carving the human figure in 797
the round. This discovery came about in a curious manner. When King George V 114
died, Chaseling, in one of his sermons, expressed grief at the great loss the nation
had suffered. This sermon and the concern of the missionary over the loss of his
king so impressed *Mauwulan* that he carved a mortuary post,[21] similar to those
used on the *jiritja* graves, but which was supposed to resemble the King. This
post *Mauwulan* presented to the missionary so that he would be reminded of his
dead monarch. Chaseling, in 1938, realizing the importance of his discovery,
presented the mortuary post to the Australian Museum, Sydney. Unfortunately
the Museum authorities, unaware that the post was a unique example of
aboriginal handicraft, did not describe it in a scientific journal.

I was able to examine this figure early in 1949. It was the head of a bearded
man (Pl. 138C, D) cut on the end of a hardwood post about four feet long and
five inches in diameter. The face, about five inches long, consisted of eyes, a
nose, lips and ears; the ears, however, being somewhat out of position.[22] The
body of the pole is decorated with ceremonial string.

I also collected at Yirrkalla a number of human heads carved in wood, most 532*
of them representing spirit people or *Mokoi* who live in the surrounding jungles 776
and eucalyptus forests.

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[18] This was because the aborigines made *Bopalindi* a member of the *jiritja* moiety. [609]

[19] According to Warner (1937), p. 434, at Milingimbi burial posts are placed on the graves.

[20] Warner (1937), p. 433, describes this food-collecting ritual at Milingimbi, and the Berndts (1949), p. 216, at Yirrkalla.

[21] Warner (1937), p. 504, refers to a burial post being erected on the aboriginal graves at Milingimbi. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 48, record the finding of a burial post figure at the same locality.

[22] I am indebted to the Australian Museum, Sydney, for the photograph of this specimen, E.46535, and the relevant details.

*532 [178] The aborigines told me that, prior to the visit of Mr and Mrs Berndt to Yirrkalla during 1947, they had not carved these small heads. But when they made one and showed it to Mr and Mrs Berndt, the interest shown stimulated them to make more.[23] These little examples of aboriginal craftsmanship, many showing evidence of considerable skill, prove the ability of the aboriginal craftsmen to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

*532 881 ● 114 *Function.* Elkin and the Berndts[24] state that the carved figures they illustrate of the Elder Wauwelak Sister, the Great Laintjung, and Laintjung's son Banaitja' are shown only to initiated men. They write: 'The original artist who has made the figure enters the hut; outside, the postulants are sitting or standing with faces turned away, but when the songman begins to clap his sticks, they are led up to look upon the sacred object. Finally, when the singing is completed, the designs on the figure are explained and discussed. At times, during the showing of the object, the figure may be held ritually by an actor who writhes on the ground like the python who swallowed the Wauwelak sisters.'

During my last visit to Yirrkalla (1952) I questioned the aborigines about these statements. The men of both moieties were emphatic that they were incorrect and that the carved figures they had produced for Mr Berndt and me are purely secular and would not be used in any of the secret rituals.[25]

They explained, however, that pole figures (similar to the Chaseling figure) representing *Djunkgao* and his sister *Madalait* are kept in special huts near the ceremonial grounds where the *Djunkgao* ceremonies are being performed. The figure of *Djunkgao* is shown to all the initiated men, but that of *Madalait* to only a few of the older tribal leaders.

*532 778 The pole figures of *Djunkgao* and *Madalait* are carved in hard wood, painted with the appropriate designs and decorated with *dua* ceremonial string. At the completion of the rituals the string is removed for future use and the posts, with other sacred objects, buried in the mud of a sacred waterhole.[26] The following year the same figures are taken out, re-painted and re-decorated. They usually last about three years.

*532 The carved figures in my collection, *Tjambuwal*, *Laitjun*, or even the carved figures of *Djunkgao* and *Madalait*, would not have been used in any sacred ceremonies. They were produced because the native men enjoyed making them and because we were interested.

*532 177 322 *Methods of Manufacture.* During the last war there was a large Air Force camp near Yirrkalla where, at one time or another, most of the able-bodied aborigines were employed. During that time the aborigines not only learned the

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[23] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), Pl. 9, illustrate a number of the carved heads collected by Mr and Mrs Berndt.

[24] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 50.

[25] Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 58, state that the carved heads 'are shown to novices at initiation, and to postulants at ceremonies of revelation'.

[26] Warner (1937), p. 356, describes how the sacred objects of the *dua narra* ceremonies (analagous to those of *Djunkgao* at Yirrkalla) are buried in the mud of the sacred totemic waterhole.

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

On the obverse side the lizard, *tjunda* (Pl. 132F), is pictured in the right-hand panel. In the left is a water-fowl, *buorta*, with its tracks. When *Djunkgao* and *Madalait* saw the water-bird feeding on the seeds of the swamp-grass, they said: 'We will "sing" the bird, *buorta*, and the tracks that it makes in the mud, so that they will be our mark forever.' Since that day the bird and its tracks have belonged to the *Djunkgao* sacred objects. 773* 778 532*

The dots on either side of the bird are the grass-seeds it eats, and the cross-hatching, the leaves of that food plant.

The lizard occupies the right-hand panel on the reverse side of the music stick (Pl. 132E). In the left-hand panel, the dots are the seeds and the cross-hatched area, the leaves of the food plant of the bird, *buorta*. The tracks are those of the same bird.

The Music Stick of Madalait. Plate 133E, F pictures the music stick of the woman, *Madalait*.

On the obverse side (Pl. 133E) *tjunda*, the lizard, occupies the left-hand panel and his tracks, with the traditional pattern of the soft sand running down the hill, the right-hand panel.

On the reverse side (Pl. 133F) the lizard is in the right-hand panel, and in the left the mark in the sand made by *Djunkgao's* canoe when he pulled it up on the beach at Jelangbara. The short vertical lines indicate the breaking waves at the same place.

The Walking or Digging Stick of Djunkgao and his Sister. Plate 134C, D represents one of the walking or digging sticks of *Djunkgao* and his sister, *Madalait*, with which they made the sacred wells.[38]

In the centre of the obverse side (Pl. 134D) is the now familiar design of the lizard and the running sand. The long vertical line on the upper panel, *a*, symbolizes the mark made in the sand by *Djunkgao's* canoe as he pulled it up on the beach at Jelangbara.[39] The short transverse lines on either side of *a* are the waves breaking on the beach. The herring-bone designs on the lower panels on both sides of the digging stick are the leaves and branches of *murinji* trees (probably *Casuarina equisetifolia*) which now grow in the sand-hills at Port Bradshaw where *Djunkgao* and his sister pushed their digging sticks into the ground.[40]

The Ceremonial Object. Figure 68A, B illustrates both sides of a *dua* engraved ceremonial object belonging to the mythical man, *Djunkgao*, and the lizard, *tjunda*.

The design on the panel *a* of A pictures the tracks of the lizard on the side of the sand-hill, and the parallel lines on panel *b*, the series of sand-hills which *Djunkgao* 'sang' at Port Bradshaw.[41]

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[38] Berndt (1952), p. 1, states that the walking stick of *Djunkgao* is a symbolic penis. When describing the walking stick (Pl. 134C, D) to me, the aborigines did not state [illegible] was associated in any way with the male sex organ. [39] Myth, p. 273.

[40] This is possibly the same as the stick, *mauwulan*, carried by the sun-woman during her journey across the sky, p. 273. [41] Myth, p. 273.

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On the reverse side, B, the designs *c* and *d* symbolize the lines of light on the crest of the waves and the mark made in the wet sand by the bottom of the canoe as *Djunkgao* pulled it up on the beach at Jelangbara. 778 773* 532*

The Lizard, Tjunda. Plate 134B is a *dua* carved figure of the lizard, *tjunda*, seen by *Djunkgao* and his sister, *Madalait*, at Jelangbara, north of Port Bradshaw.[42] The cross-hatched parallel panels on the neck and the shoulders are the parallel sand-hills 'sung' by *Djunkgao* at Jelangbara; the zigzag line, the track of the lizard; and the groups of transverse lines on either side, the loose sand running from under its feet as it walked along the crest of a sand-hill.

The Man, Banaitja, or Laitjun

While *Banaitja* was resting on the bottom of the Daluruwaltjalapa swamp, after he had been speared by the aborigines of Blue Mud Bay, he painted designs on every part of his body.[43] Later, when he rose from the water in the form of *Laitjun*, he decreed that these designs should belong to the individual *jiritja matas* (language groups) of north-eastern Arnhem Land.[44] Some of these *mata* designs are painted on the carved figure of *Laitjun*.

Plate 135A, B illustrates the carved and painted figure of *Laitjun*, the transformed *Banaitja*, whose body is covered with the *jiritja mata* designs mentioned in the myth. He is wearing feather ornaments on his beard and arms, and is carrying, in his right hand, the bark bundle[45] (later called *laitjun* or *banaitja*) with which he beat the ground to call the aborigines together. *Laitjun* is shown with a sub-incised penis.[46] Although the decorations on the head and face of the carved figure of *Laitjun* have no ceremonial meaning, those on the front, back and legs represent some, but not all, of the various *jiritja matas* (language groups) of north-eastern Arnhem Land.

a, belonging to the *dalwongu mata* of Blue Mud Bay, refers to hives of wild bees which flew from the Matamatani swamps, at Blue Mud Bay, to Milingimbi, so that they would not be destroyed by a bush-fire.[47]

b, a design similar to that of the *dalwongu*, belongs to the *manaitja mata* of Blue Mud Bay.[48] It refers to totemic honey and honeycomb in unidentified swamps at Blue Mud Bay.

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[42] Myth, p. 273. [43] For complete myth, see p. 279.

[44] For description of language groups, *matas*, and clan groups, *malas*, see p. 106. [171]

[45] This is similar to the *alukwira* bark bundle used in the *arawaltja* ceremonies of Groote Eylandt, Pl. 16C. Warner (1937), p. 502, calls similar bark bundles *banitja*.

[46] As mentioned previously, p. 279, this would suggest that the myth of *Banaitja* or *Laitjun* originated in an area where sub-incision was practised.

[47] Bark painting, Pl. 93B. Warner (1937), p. 13, lists wild bees, among other totems, as belonging to the *dalwongu* language group. Berndt (1948), p. 318, states that the design refers to a fresh-water weed. Later, Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 23, correct this and refer to the *dalwongu* as a *mata* associated with the *wauba* bird.

[48] Bark painting, Pl. 121D; also a painted *jiritja* skull, Pl. 104B, C. Berndt (1948), p. 318, gives as its meaning, bees and honeycomb. Elkin and the Berndts (1950), p. 23, list *manaitja* as a *mala* (clan) group instead of a *mata* (language) group. This may be correct, for when asking the aborigines to which *mata* they belonged, they sometimes gave the name of their *mala*. Our knowledge of the *mata* and the *mala* is incomplete and confused. [114]

CARVED AND PAINTED FIGURES

The designs on the head of *Duwuliana*, Pl. 139B, C, all refer to rain, hail and 532* thunder-clouds. The dots on the face of B are hail-stones, and the cross-hatched 776 panel across the forehead, small clouds. On the side of the head, Pl. 139C, the 778 cross-hatched panels indicate falling rain, and the white crown, the tops of cumulus clouds.

The Baijini Man, Tankupou

Plate 139F, G pictures the carved head of a *Baijini* man, *Tankupou*, who 177 once lived at Port Bradshaw.[83] The black rectangle on the forehead, Pl. 139F, 773* is the pillow of *Tankupou*, and the cross-hatched panel beneath, the pillow-slip. 532* The designs on Pl. 139G all refer to the cotton goods owned by the *Baijini*, and the vertical lines on the neck to the posts of the *Baijini* house.

The Baijini Man, Gurumuluna

Gurumuluna was the head man of the *Baijini* visitors to Port Bradshaw. He is now included in the pantheon of mythical beings who created the topography [776] of Port Bradshaw.

Plate 140A, B, C pictures the carved head of *Gurumuluna*. The designs on the forehead, Pl. 140B, indicate a distinguishing badge which, according to my informants, is similar to that worn by a ship's captain. The two triangles in front of the ear, Pl. 140C, are the cotton sheets for *Gurumuluna's* bed, and the cross-hatched rectangle in the same position on Pl. 140A, his pillow. The cross-hatched triangles on the top of the head and behind the ears represent the roof of the house of the *Baijini*, which was constructed of bamboo rafters and palm-tree thatch. The parallel vertical lines on the neck refer to the upright posts of the house.

The Spirit Man, Jindjaraui

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The spirit man, *Jindjaraui*, lives on the shores of a swamp west of Arnhem 773* Bay. This *Mokoi* carries a long steel knife in his hair which, when he strikes it, gives off a clear bell-like note. This sound guides the *jiritja* spirits of the 776 dead belonging to the Arnhem Bay area to *Jindjaraui's* camp, one of the *jiritja* [775] 'heavens'.[84]

Plate 139J, K illustrates the carved head of the *Mokoi*, *Jindjaraui*. The dark-coloured triangle above the ear on Pl. 139K is the blade of the steel knife the *Mokoi* carries in his hair and the cross-hatched rectangle below, its handle. The cross-hatching on either side of the knife indicates clouds and the dots on the top

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[83] For more complete details of the *Baijini* myth, see p. 333.

[84] Berndt (1949), p. 94, claims that the spirits of the *jiritja* dead from Yirrkalla go to Badu (Mulgrave Island) in the Torres Straits. He, however, refers to fifteen other names for the *jiritja* heaven. Although my *jiritja* informants from Yirrkalla stated emphatically that their spirits [114] went to Nalkuma (p. 331), not to Badu, and I did not obtain such a large number of designations for the *jiritja* home of the dead as did Berndt, the myth associated with *Jindjaraui* indicates that 775 there is more than one *jiritja* heaven. The *dua* moiety at Yirrkalla, on the other hand, refer to only one heaven, i.e. Purelko (myth, p. 325), although the *dua* moiety of Milingimbi call their land of the dead Djiraia.

6

ASTRONOMY

THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES, whose knowledge of the night sky is far greater than that of most white men, have surrounded the heavenly bodies with a maze of stories. 821 114

Although the writers of the last century, Smyth,[1] Squires,[2] Ridley[3] and others, gathered much information about aboriginal astronomy, few later writers have done so. Maegraith[4] has published a detailed and valuable description of the astronomy of the Aranda and Luritja tribes of Central Australia; Mountford[5] has recorded a myth of Orion and the Pleiades from the Adnjamatana tribe of South Australia, and later,[6] more detailed information on the astronomy of the Pitjendadjara tribe of western Central Australia.

In Arnhem Land the aboriginal men appeared to have an extensive knowledge of the major stars, the planets and some of the inconspicuous star groups.[7] They have depicted, on sheets of bark, many of the myths relating to these heavenly bodies. Although there are some resemblances between the myths of Milingimbi and Yirrkalla, those of Oenpelli, Groote Eylandt and Yirrkalla show wide differences. [171]

1. GROOTE EYLANDT

The Constellation of the Crab, Unwala

The aboriginal constellation of the crab, *Unwala*, an unmarried sky-man living by himself, is a group of small stars at the head of Hydra. This constellation is an example of how small, inconspicuous star groups form part of the aboriginal astronomy, while adjacent first and second magnitude stars, like Procyon and Regulus, are apparently disregarded. 171

Plate 150A is the painting of the mud crab, *Unwala*. It is, in fact, almost a duplicate of the design on Pl. 9B, which deals with the ancestral crabs at Bickerton Island.

The Milky Way

The Groote Eylandt aborigines look upon the Milky Way, *atalumа*, as a sky river in whose waters are many large fish and a multitude of water-lily bulbs. It is from this river that the star-people gather their food. All the stars in the section of the Milky Way west of a line drawn between the Southern Cross and

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[1] Smyth (1878), pp. 431-4.
[2] Squires (n.d.), pp. 11-61.
[3] Ridley (1875), pp. 141-2.
[4] Maegraith (1932), pp. 19-26.
[5] Mountford (1939), pp. 103-4.
[6] Mountford (1948), pp. 151-7.
[7] Maegraith (1932), p. 20, noticed the same characteristics among the aborigines of Central Australia.

[P.478 contains no Text]

Warner[14] has a variant of this myth, in which it is the parrot-fish who decides that, when he dies, he will remain dead. The aborigines contend that the parrot-fish was a 'silly fool'. 532* 773* 821

Plate 155B illustrates the legend of the moon-man, *Alinda*, and the parrot-fish man, *Dirima*. In the centre are the two opponents belabouring each other with clubs; on the lower left is the dead parrot-fish with his weapon lying beside him, and on the lower right, the dead moon. The parrot-fish is depicted on the lower left, and the moon, in its various phases, near the upper edge.

The Moon, Nalimba

The aborigines believe that in the early days of the world the moon, *Nalimba*, was a man who spent much of his time collecting a yam-like plant, *waralki*. His sister, a dugong-woman, *Balwokman*, who lived in and around the swamps near by, collected *rakia*, the spike-rush, for food. One day the dugong-woman was searching for *rakia* when she inadvertently walked through some itch weed which, once her skin became dry, set up an intense irritation. She tried many remedies, but without success, until in sheer desperation she dived into the sea. Finding that water stopped the itching, she said to the moon-man:

'I'm going to change myself into a dugong, and stay in the sea forever.'

'If you do,' said the moon, 'I'll live always in the sky.'

So, true to his word, *Nalimba* left the earth, taking the yams, *waralki*, with him.

One day, as the dugong was sleeping on the surface of the water, two pandanus-tree men, *Gurun-gurun*, decided to kill her for food. But just as they were about to do so a large wave breaking on the beach frightened the dugong away. The *Gurun-gurun*, in disgust, transformed themselves into pandanus trees.

Since then the moon has lived in the sky, the dugong in the ocean, and the pandanus tree on the edge of the sea and the watercourses.

At the same time, associated in some way not ascertained with the moon and the dugong, there was a man, *Guripun*, who with his young wife was collecting *rakia*. They were tying it up in bundles when the string broke, scattering the *rakia* everywhere. That *rakia* now grows in many of the swamps of Arnhem Land. Disgusted by their misfortune, the couple went into the sky and became the stars Arcturus (Alpha Bootes) and Saak (Eta Bootes). When the star Arcturus appears in the eastern sky the aborigines know that the *rakia* is mature and ready to collect.

Connected with the myth of the moon, *Nalimba*, is a belief, similar to that held by the Groote Eylandters,[15] of an association between the moon and the tides. When the moon is new or full, and sets respectively at sunset or sunrise, [171] [823]

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[14] Warner (1937), p. 523. There are several other myths of Arnhem Land that explain the origin of death: the moon-man, *Alinda*, p. 193; the native-cat, *Bararuma*, p. 257; and the myth recorded by Berndt (1948a), pp. 16-30, which bears some resemblance to that of *Nalimba*, the moon-man, p. 405. In the Berndt version, belonging to the *jiritja* moiety, however, it is the dugong which brings death to the world. [114]

[15] See Groote Eylandt myth, p. 161.

GROUP I

The Sacred Figures and Their Background.

532 616 778 The figures under discussion here belong to both societies. The *'Wauwɔlak* Sisters[9] are *'du:a*—the more conservative of the two moieties, while *'Laintʃuŋ* and *'Banaitʃa* are *'jiritʃa*—the moiety that concerns itself to a great extent with introduced beliefs and customs.

776 173 The *'Wauwɔlak* are two " Dreaming "[10] Sisters, associated with the *'dʒuŋgawɔn*, *'kunapipi* and *'ŋu:rlmɑ:k* ceremonies, which are age-grading and seasonal festivals of the *'du:a 'ŋa:ra* (i.e. " shade " or shelter).[11] Their mythology and their song cycle are preoccupied with after-birth blood, with menstruation, and with giant rock pythons, by one of whom they are swallowed. Although they themselves are looked on as Fertility Mothers,[12] they were originally brought into being by the *'Dʒaŋgəwɔl*, the most important of all the Ancestral Beings, who were responsible for the peopling of this coast with the predecessors of the present-day aborigines, and for creating all natural resources. The *'Dʒaŋgəwɔl* Sisters, *'Maralaitʃ* and *'Pildʒinbərərɔiju*, and *'Dʒaŋgəwɔl* himself, travelled from the mythical land of *Bɔ'ralku*, bringing with them the sacred *'raŋga* objects used in the sacred rituals, in addition to the ceremonies mentioned above. Unfortunately, although carved figures of the *'Dʒaŋgəwɔl* are occasionally made, none were used during our period of field work, although all their rituals were observed.

173 Briefly then, the two *'Wauwɔlak* Sisters (one younger than the other) came from *'Mu:rnwɔl* waterhole, in the " Bush " on the mainland below Milingimbi. The elder sister was pregnant, and eventually gave birth to a child ; the after-birth blood was still running as she walked along near this place, accompanied by her sister and carrying the baby. They arrived at a deep well, near which they camped.

A large rock python, living in this well, smelt the blood ; he came out and sprayed out water like rain. The elder sister told the other to make a bark hut, and by the time this was erected, it was dark. The snake then made vivid flashes of lightning, but the Sisters were unaware that this was his doing. Then the snake came out of the waterhole and on to the bank, and slowly moved towards the sisters. When the women saw him coming, the younger sister got up, and began to dance to keep him away. When she was tired, she called to her sister, who then began to dance in her turn. But as the snake still came on, the elder sister called out, " Come on, sister. It's no good for me—my blood is coming out, and he can smell it and he's coming closer." So the younger sister danced. When she was tired the elder sister

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[114] [9] L. Warner (*op. cit.* p. 248 *et seq.*) has given a description of the mythology and ritual of the " Wawilak " Sisters. The version given in this paper differs slightly from this.

[10] Cf. the concept of the " Eternal Dreamtime." Their reality is in the past, but their spirit is eternal.

[778] [11] Each moiety has a sacred shelter during its ceremonies, adjacent to the dancing ground.

[12] The concept of the Fertility Mother is common in Northern Territory of Australia : *vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, MS. book for publication.

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PLATE XIV

The last stage of the Kunapipi (see Text figure 7) . 160

PLATE XV

An actor wearing the "pokiti" head-dress and decorated with the lightning totemic design, pauses before onlookers on the sacred ground of the Kadjari; he is ready to begin his dance and awaits the singing (At Birrundudu, western-central Northern Territory) 161

PLATE XVI

The kangaroo totemic dancing of the "desert" people: a part of the Kadjari series. (Gordon Downs, eastern Kimberleys, Western Australia) 192

PLATE XVII

Ceremonial intercourse on the sacred ground (see Text figure 5) 193

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Some of the photographs illustrated here were kindly supplied by Mr. H. Shepherdson of the Methodist Overseas Mission, Elcho Island. The brown paper drawings were photographed by Mr. Woodward Smith, Sydney University. Other photographs were taken by Berndt during research work under the Australian National Research Council and during a special labour survey of the western-central Northern Territory cattle stations.

114

INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR A. P. ELKIN

Baldwin Spencer in his *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory,* 773
1914 (Chapter IX, and pp. 217–8) recorded myths which ascribed
important creative and formative activities to culture-heroines, in 114
particular to Imberombera and Ungulla Robunbun in western Arnhem Land, and ceremonial activity together with original possession of the bullroarer, to Kunapipi women in the Roper River region. All alike left spirit-children at places along the routes of their journeyings, and the first two were responsible for the tribal and linguistic divisions in their region, having "sent forth" spirit-children to found the tribes.*

In 1937, Professor W. L. Warner's important book, *A Black* 114
Civilization, was published, giving the results of his field work in
1926–29 at Millingimbi (Crocodile Islands) and the neighbouring 773
region of north-east Arnhem Land. Half of it is a study of mythology 796
and ritual. Two of the most important figures are the Wawilak sisters, who named the animals and plants as they travelled from inland to the north along the Goyder River, and who, in an endeavour to ward off the great ancestral python, Yurlunggur, and to end the wet season, sang and danced the songs of four great rituals, one of which was the Gunabibi (Kunapipi). The Yurlunggur swallowed the two women and their babies, causing their deaths, but their spirits lived on and revealed the rituals to two Dreamtime men, so that the important past should not be forgotten. This included the [304]
introduction of circumcision which the Wawalik had intended to perform on their sons (Warner, pp. 250–9). In the Gunabibi ritual, the Gunabibi is the bullroarer, and also symbolizes Yurlunggur who swallowed and regurgitated the two women and their sons (pp. 293–4). Another important ritual myth is about two Djunkgao sisters who came into the region from the south-east, naming natural species

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* Compare too the similar myth of the "big woman", Warahmoorungee, of [171]
the Iwaidja tribe, in this region, as given by Inspector Foelsche, "Notes on the Aborigines of North Australia", *Journal, Royal Society of South Australia, Vol. V, p.* 17. This is the "Mother", "Waramurunggoindju", who, Mr. Berndt was informed by the Maung at Goulburn Island, came from the Macassan Islands, and eventually by way of Timor and Bathurst Island to Cape Don, the Iwaidja and other tribal territories, and finally to east Arnhem Land. R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Section 3, to be published by the Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology.

114 as they came, making ritual-totemic wells or centres, and giving
birth to the ancestors of the present people. They made and carried
773 sacred totemic emblems, and instituted the Narra ritual in which
796 these are used; but some Dreamtime men stole the baskets in which
they kept these objects and performed the Narra—a theft which the Djunkgao took in good grace (pp. 336–40).

[114] As we read these myths and the description of the associated
rituals, we detect a difference, at least in emphasis, in the rôles played
773 by women in the creative epoch in this region as compared with other
562 regions for which we have reliable information. According to the classic works of Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899) and *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904), and the later work of Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stamme in Zentral-Australien*, I, II and III, 1907, 1908, 1910, human beings arose from semi-human-animal forbears, or were given their forms in an operation performed by "self-existent" totemic beings on existing incomplete beings; and in some cases, too, in the more northern tribes, human beings just arose. There is no instance of one or two great culture-heroines being held responsible for natural features, tribes and languages, though women were included in many of the earliest groups of human wanderers; more explicitly the Unmatjera have a tradition of several groups of *ertwaininga* women who wandered across the country, carrying yamsticks, and leaving individuals behind at various spots, which became spirit totemic centres, from which these individuals went forth to be reincarnated.

In the sphere of ritual, however, the myths reflect a stage or period in which women took an active part and had full knowledge of sacred symbols. Thus, in one myth, three women from time to time painted themselves with sacred designs, carried the nurtunja (a sacred symbol), performed ceremonies and changed their totemic and subsection affiliations. In another, the Unthippa women in the course of their wanderings, used to carry off and circumcize any novices they found, an event to which reference is still made in circumcision ritual (*Native Tribes*, pp. 195–6, 433, 441–3; *Northern Tribes*, pp. 146, 150, 152–9).

171 If we compare the mythology of the centre and north-centre with
773 that of Arnhem Land as we knew it in 1937, we see that in both the
spirits of men and women pre-exist because of happenings in the
562 Dreamtime, and women in that period played an inner rôle in what
[774] is now ritual reserved for initiated men. In the former vast regions,
however, women did not form the country, name natural species, determine the tribal and linguistic divisions, nor institute ceremonies But this is just what the culture heroines of Arnhem Land were said to have done. This difference in power, or in degree of function, was sufficient to suggest further research in this region into the rôle of the

culture-heroine in mythology; and all the more so, as no such dis- 171
tinctively creative powers were ascribed to females in the myths of 773
any other region then studied, such as the Kimberley Division of 773
Western Australia, the Great Victoria Desert, North Queensland, 562
nor South-East Australia. In the north-west and north-east of the
continent, the important creative culture-heroes are males and many
of them were at times in animal form. In the South-East not only was
the male aspect dominant, but there was only one great hero, for
each tribe or region, named here Bundjil, there Nurunderi, or
Baiami or Gulambra or Goin and so on.*

In 1939 my friend, Mr. W. E. Harney, who had spent many years [114]
in and around Arnhem Land, and has a greater and sounder knowl-
edge of Aboriginal custom, belief and ritual than any other layman
sent me some notes in which much prominence was given to the
"Old Woman," Kunapipi, both in doctrines and in ritual. After [794]
discussing the material with him, I was satisfied that in the Roper, 776
Macarthur and Victoria River areas, a very vivid cult of the "mother-
goddess" type was functioning. Her name varied, being Kunapipi, 773
Mumuna, Kliarin-Kliari, and so on, but she was usually referred to
as the "Old Woman" or the "Mother". She was the source of life in
man and nature, both in the Dreamtime or creative past and now.
In this activity she was associated with a great serpent, usually the
Rainbow serpent, who "made the road" into the womb for the pre- [775]
existent spirits to be incarnated and reincarnated. She was also the
very earth itself, that from which living things came and on which
they depended for sustenance. This doctrine was expressed in the 796
Kunapipi ritual. In it her womb was represented, by a trench into
which the initiands were put, and from which they were reborn. In
addition, the bullroarer, also representing her womb, when swung
at the ritual became the sojourning symbol of each initiand's ritual
or "wood" spirit. After the ceremony, when the Yermalindji, the
symbol of the great snake, was burnt in the earth-womb, the bull-
roarer was buried there also. Thus, the lad's ritual "shade" remained
in Kunapipi, and did so until the disintegration of the symbol, when [775]

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* I can speak from personal field work for all these regions except the north-east. See also articles in *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 1, pp. 46-62, R. Piddington, "Karadjeri Initiation". Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 66-93, Ursula H. McConnel, "Myths of the Wikmunkan and Wiknatara Tribes"; *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, No. 4, pp. 452-477, Vol. VII, No. 1, pp. 69-105, "Totemic Hero Cults in the Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland"; Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 382-404, A. Capell, "Mythology in Northern Kimberley". Vol. XIII, No. 3, pp. 255-260, and Vol. XIV, No. 1, pp. 31-53; "A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia", by R. and C. Berndt, *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney, 1945.

Also D. F. Thomson, "The Hero Cult, Initiation and Totemism on Cape York", *Journal, Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXIII, pp. 453-538; and "Notes on a Hero Cult from the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland", *op. cit.* Vol. LXIV, pp. 217-236. A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, pp. 475-508.

796 it went to his Dreaming or spirit home to wait for the return of the
[775] animating spirit after the death and final burial of the individual.

Further, because of the original life-giving power of the "Mother",
[789] the ritual which included many dances referring to natural species,
was believed to ensure the normal cycle of the seasons. This, however,
did not occur directly as though the effect of increase rites, for the
ritual was not regarded as such; but just as, and while, men
[774] performed their ritual in the "Mother Place" to ensure their own births
and rebirths, so the "shades" of natural species performed their own
increase rites in the spirit-world.

The details on which this brief analysis was based suggested that
[177] the Kunapipi ritual as described by Professor Warner as part of the
Wawilak cycle and as having come from the south through the Rainbarngo
(Rembaranga) tribe (p. 452), was a most important cultural
element in Arnhem Land, the "pure" form of which must be sought
along the line of the "southern" rivers such as the Roper, Katherine
and Victoria.

In 1946, I worked for a short period amongst the tribes on the
177 Roper and Katherine and also visited north-east Arnhem Land, and
773 in 1947 and 1948 worked amongst the Mangarai and Alawa on the
796 Roper, and the Djauan and southern Rembaranga in southern
[114] Arnhem Land. While at Yirrkalla near Cape Arnhem in the north-east
corner of the region I saw the ceremonial ground with the
Nanggoru and Kanala where a Kunapipi ritual had been held some
weeks earlier, and obtained information which showed that it had
there coalesced with the Wauwalak (or Wawilak) myth, the very
"hut", in which the two sisters and the baby were swallowed by
Muit (Yurlunggur or Julunggul) the snake, being an important feature
in the ritual. Moreover, the tradition, as given to me, was that Moit,
that is the Wauwalak ritual, spreading south was met somewhere
about the Rose River –Nungubuyu tribal country –by the Kunapipi
ritual. For the people there, being afraid of his swallowing habits,
killed him, and made their own *mumuna*, Mother Dreaming. The
result is the present Kunapipi, with the Yermalindji—the Mother's
yam stick, and at the same time the Rainbow Snake's symbol—and
the Anggoru, the Mother's earth womb.

It was quite clear then that by 1946 the Kunapipi ritual had
[114] reached Arnhem Bay, and had done so since early 1929, for Professor
Warner wrote (p. 452) that it was not found in any of the clans
around Arnhem and Buckingham Bays, or on the islands of the
north-east though large numbers of the men from these districts
went south to take part in ritual with the clans of the same general
linguistic group who did possess it. Further, I was told in 1946 at
Elcho Island that a local man, Kumu, had brought the Kunapipi in
about 1929 to Elcho and other islands from Caledon Bay where he
saw it.

786
sexual intercourse with the obvious representatives of the "Mother" 796
enable her to fulfil her important function. [789]

Thus, here as in the Ancient East, ritual sex-intercourse is a sacramental act in the cult of the "Great Mother", on which her potency 773
and the survival of man and nature depend. In both regions we are 786
in the presence of a "Mystery Religion". The precious guarded
secret is only revealed to the initiated, the twice born, and that 796
secret, that "mystery", is the continuity of life. Life, however, is no 789
mere visible or external phenomenon. In all its forms it has a spiritual counterpart, its "shade". The Cult Mother is more than the Big Woman of the mythological period; she is eternal in the earth, and present and active in her "shade" form in every Kunapipi. The Great Snake, too, Muit or Yermalindji, is present in his symbols at the ceremony, teaching the "reborn" through the traditional words and ritual behaviour of the elders, speaking through them even as the prophet and teacher is the voice of his God. The ritual or "wood" shade, the spirit double of the initiand enters the bullroarer symbol of the Mother and with it remains in her "earth womb" until it goes to the spirit home. While the actors perform their rites to ensure the birth and rebirth of mankind and the "increase" of the Great Mother and the Great Snake as manifested in the rains and the consequent fertility of the earth, the spirit-womb of the Mother is made
potent; in addition, as they represent in mime the behaviour of [825]
animals, reptiles, birds and insects, the "shades" of these creatures [774]
perform the increase ceremonies of their own kind in their own ritual places in the spirit-sphere. Finally, the women who have co-operated in the Kunapipi with their "outside" calls, responses, songs and dance (like the Bundami or Awalambi), and who then take part in
the ritual intercourse with men from the Mother Place, become [775]
bearers of the latters' ritual or Kunapipi "shades"; at least, such is the doctrine in the Roper River region.

So life is assured to man and nature for it is eternal in the spirit world, in the Great Mother who brings forth and whose impregnating symbol is the Great Snake, the iridescent rainbow which never [821]
fails to join the sky to the earth.

Such is the appeal of the cult. Its function in the social and
economic life of a food-gathering people in a tropical environment 114
can be studied, and indeed is obvious and logical. A most valuable 794
attempt to analyse the North-East Arnhem Land cults from this
point of view has already been made by Professor W. L. Warner in 796
A Black Civilization. But why should such a Fertility Goddess cult 177
arise in Arnhem Land and the Victoria River region, and not also in the northern part of the Kimberley Division or in Cape York Peninsula, where the tropical seasons and conditions of living for a parasitic food-gathering people are similar? The answer probably lies in the differences in external contacts. Here it is sufficient to say

114 that the several centuries of contact with Macassan and pre-Macas-
san traders, fishers and sojourners which marked the Arnhem Land
177 coasts from the Victoria River right round to Groote Eylandt, were
794 not experienced in the other two tropical regions. It is, therefore,
possible that pre-Islamic religious influence was exerted on the
796 Aborigines, perhaps through individuals who accompanied the
Macassans and others to the islands to the north, for in some of
these, the earlier Hindu cults were cherished in spite of the prosely-
tizing nature of Islam. Moreover, the Mother cult-heroine is said in
[773] myths to have come through the sea, whether she be Kunapipi of the
Victoria and the Roper, or the Mother of the Iwaidja and other
tribes of Western Arnhem Land.*

Mana and Other Problems

The above is the general principle and question raised by the
114 Kunapipi cult. Mr. Berndt's book, however, in giving a description
778 and analysis of this cult, raises many other important matters. For
example, there is the problem of power or "grace" in religion, indi-
cated in north-east Arnhem Land by the term *dal*. It is the anthropo-
logical problem of *mana* over again. It operates through the Mother
[776] or through Ancestral Beings who in their "spirit parts" are present
in the ritual. But does the ritual automatically release that power,
setting it in motion for the welfare of man and nature? Or is it
manifested through life and increase by the will of the Mother or
other Being in response to the ritual? Obviously, according to the
doctrine, it cannot operate apart from such Being or Beings. Indeed,
is it not that Being in activity or rather in relation to man and nature
—an activity and presence realized in ritual? Problems associated
with the Doctrine of the Trinity are not peculiar to Christianity.

114 Mr. Berndt agrees with Professor Warner that the Aborigines are
not ignorant of physiological paternity. The ritual supports this con-
842 tention. True, these natives hold also the doctrine of pre-existence,
796 of spirit-children who enter the mothers for incarnation. But, what
this entry does is to provide the "shade", the eternal spirit-part, and
so give life to that which is already in the womb, as the result of
sexual intercourse. Intercourse does not merely prepare the way for
the entry of the child-spirit and for its subsequent birth; this is the
usual view. In addition, it is followed by the formation of the foetus

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* The point of entry of the Fertility Mother cult of north-western Arnhem Land is definitely placed by the Aborigines and their song cycles in the Coburg Peninsula. The Kunapipi cult, however, seems to be distinct from this, and while I incline to find its point of distribution in the lower Victoria region, the final decision must wait for more research in the field and further analysis of the material already in hand. Mr. Berndt's maps in this volume refer only to the recent and present movement of Kunapipi songs, the movement west from the Roper being a return along a song route to a western point of distribution, and not necessarily diffusion from a point of entry at the mouth of the Roper.

which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have 114
had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted
Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any 842
case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical. 796

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author 114
is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the 123
anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording 787
of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams.

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the 114
ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. 562
Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby 796
playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle.

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the 114
religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), 121
also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he
was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National
Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, [122]
we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from
long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to [797]
engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been
operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had [177]
been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946.

123 Mr. and Mrs. Berndt on their part had proved their capacity to obtain the confidence of the Aborigines, to be admitted into the "inside" life of the men and women respectively, and to work in the native language. These three qualifications are essential for a study of a subject so intimate as a religious cult with its many personal and social ramifications.

With regard to the language it should be emphasized that more is required than ability to use it only as a phrasebook tool for asking questions, or to record slowly long texts. It is necessary to follow the ritual songs as they are chanted, and the discussions on doctrine and ritual. Fortunately, previous linguistic research in the region had
[114] been done by Dr. A. Capell of this Department, and the Methodist Missions at both Millingimbi and Yirrkalla had been using the local
[797] related dialects for some years. The general principles of the language and a reasonable vocabulary were known. Armed with this knowledge together with much field experience, and living for nearly twelve months quite close to the native camp, a remarkable degree of proficiency was obtained. In this type of work, the result of the efforts of two persons is more than desirable.

I have emphasized this point so that readers will know that the
114 book is truly first hand work. Unfortunately, native opinions and interpretations could not be given in the Aboriginal language for the printing cost would be prohibitive, but some of them will be published elsewhere. I have, however, discussed with the author all the statements and interpretations attributed to native informants, and the translations of texts, and am satisfied that we are presented with a reliable record of intelligent native thought and belief. Mr. Berndt's own opinions are only expressed, and then sparingly, at the conclusion of chapters, and in the final chapter. Also, Mr. Berndt was able
[123] to check with his wife the women's attitude to, and part in, the ritual, and their knowledge of doctrines. Only a woman worker can observe and inquire into this satisfactorily. Mrs. Berndt, therefore, provides a further assurance of the reliability of this record.

For these reasons, as well as for my own special interest in the subject matter and in the region and because of my close association with Mr. Berndt in his anthropological research, I commend this book. It is a most important contribution to our knowledge of Australian Aboriginal religion, a contribution which will be increased by a study of the Djanggawul cult, now in process, which, like the Wauwalik, preceded the Kunapipi in north-east Arnhem Land.

Department of Anthropology,
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June 24, 1949.

A. P. ELKIN.

Anthropological field-work was carried out by the writer and his
114 wife in the Northern Territory between the years 1944–47, and in north-eastern Arnhem Land in 1946–47. The Ma:ra and Alawa material was obtained from informants on the Northern Territory Army Settlements in 1945, at Larramah, Mataranka, Manbulloo (Katherine), Adelaide River and Darwin; work in west-central Northern Territory and the Daly River region (mention of which is made incidentally in this volume) took place between 1944–46. In the north-eastern Arnhem Land region, in particular, our work was carried out primarily through the medium of the local dialects.

For the greater part of this field-work we were under the aegis of
122 the Australian National Research Council, and the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, while the writing up of this work was made possible by a Research Grant from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney.

As this is not a comparative study of Aboriginal religion through-
000 out Australia, no attempt is made to evaluate the material of previous field-workers who have written on this subject, and the reader will find little reference to their work in the following pages. Nevertheless, the works of O. Siebert, C. Strehlow, A. W. Howitt, B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, A. P. Elkin, L. Warner, P. Kaberry, G. Róheim, M. F. Ashley Montagu, T. G. H. Strehlow and others should be consulted, should the reader be interested in the subject.[4]

The writer wishes to acknowledge the continued help, encouragement and advice of Professor A. P. Elkin, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, and the assistance of his wife, Catherine H. Berndt, in preparing the manuscript for publication. His greatest debt however rests with the native informants who supplied the data from which this volume was compiled. The only

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4. A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, London, 1904; C. Strehlow, *Die Aranda und Loritja Stämme in Zentral Australien. Mythen, Sagen, und Märchen des Aranda-Stammes in Zentral Australien*, Gesammelt, von Carl Strehlow, Bearbeitet, Von Moritz von Leonhardi; Frankfurt, 1907 1921; E. Eylmann, *Die Eingeberenen der Kolonie Südaustralien*, Berlin, 1908; O. Siebert, *Sagen und Sitten der Dieri und Nachbarstamme in Central Australien, Globus*, Vol. 97, 1910; B. Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory of Australia*, London, 1914; H. Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal*, Adelaide, Chapter XXVII; G. Roheim, *op. cit.* 1925 and 1930, "Women and Their Life in Central Australia", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 63, 1933, pp. 207 265, *The Eternal Ones of the Dream*, New York, 1945; L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; M. F. Ashley Montagu, *Coming into Being among the Australian Aborigines*, London, 1937; B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, London, 1938; A. P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, Sydney, 1938, and "Studies in Australian Totemism", *Oceania Monograph No. 2*, Sydney; P. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane*, London, 1939; T. G. H. Strehlow, *Aranda Traditions*, Melbourne, 1947; E. A. Worms, Religiose Vorstellungen und Kultur einiger nordwestaustralischer Stamme in funfzig Legenden, *Annali Lateranensi*, IV, 1940, S. 268.

Vide also articles in the journal *Oceania*, issued by the Australian National Research Council of Sydney.

tangible recompense they may hope to receive is that readers will gain a greater insight into their religious faith, and through that knowledge will manifest a sympathetic and practical understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal problems.[5] 000

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[5] Further fieldwork on the above and related subjects was carried out in 1949–1950 at Oenpelli, western Arnhem Land, and at Milingimbi, north-central Arnhem Land, by the writer and his wife. The Kunapipi cult was witnessed in operation and carefully discussed; while fundamental issues are essentially the same, a number of regional variations were noticed, particularly in reference to song cycles. These will be incorporated later in a further volume on Kunapipi ritual and ideology. 114

131 from the Church Missionary Society settlement at Groote Eylandt,
797 and 90 miles from the nearest Methodist Mission at Elcho Island. Apart from the Mission stations of Roper River, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Milingimbi, Elcho Island, Yirrkalla and Groote Eylandt, which fringe the great Reserve, there is no other European settlement, except the new base subsidized by the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch at Ambu Kambu on Groote Eylandt.

136 The whole region is rich in indigenous foods and resources, particularly along the coast. The sea abounds in dugong, turtle, fish,
262 crayfish, shellfish, oysters, and crabs: inland, on the plains and in the jungles, there are wildfowl, emu, wallaby, kangaroo, and smaller animals, fruit, nuts, vegetables, berries, and a large variety of other bush foods, with quantities of fresh-water fish and crocodiles in the streams and rivers; and at times buffalo which have wandered eastwards from the Buffalo Plains west of Oenpelli. So plentiful is the food that, even in bad seasons, the quality may diminish, but rarely the quantity.

b Social Organization:

● 114 Before proceeding to our main study, it is necessary to outline briefly the structure of north-eastern Arnhem Land society. The work
184 of Professor Lloyd Warner is the most reliable in this respect, while the Rev. T. T. Webb and Dr. Donald Thomson have written on the
121 subject.[1] The reader will find sufficient detail in these for our present
177 purpose. But it should be borne in mind that the organization of Yirrkalla society, although basically similar to that of Milingimbi, is in many respects decidedly different. Dr. Warner viewed aboriginal social life through the eyes of Milingimbi informants, influenced by cultural trends from Cape Stewart and the inland, while the present writer views the same position from the Yirrkalla point of view, uninfluenced to any marked degree from the west, but responding to contact from aboriginal groups to the south and south-west (this is particularly apparent in our study of the Kunapipi cult).

These people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to
701 Blue Mud Bay, had a general term for themselves—the Wulamba group of clans, forming a tribe with a more or less common cultural background: natives outside this region, such as those at Groote Eylandt, called them the "Balamumu" confederacy. Balamumu may
614 be broadly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people.
197 The varying dialects (termed *mata*, "tongue") of these clans (*mala*)

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616 [1] L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, New York and London, 1937; T. T. Webb, Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406–411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412–416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935–36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31–34.

184 the Mother (or Mothers), represented quite often by Two Sisters
even in central-western Northern Territory, is the creative Being;
773 so from this point of view the Wauwalak cycle, now substantiating
776 the introduced Kunapipi, should possess Two Sisters who are them-
selves creative Beings. Local belief however accords this status only
794 to the Djanggawul; but since the Wauwalak are their daughters, the
original doctrine is not greatly inconvenienced. The creative Mothers
may still be the Djanggawul, making their appearance through the
Wauwalak Sisters, while the Wauwalak themselves are the Munga-
munga of the south.

The actual meaning of the name Kunapipi is not easy to discover.
773 The cult itself, with its relevant ceremonies, and the myth that sub-
794 stantiates the ritual, is Kunapipi, and this, in most areas mentioned
796 above, is translated as the "Mother", or "Old Woman". The term
"old" in this context signifies status and age, although not elderly
appearance. Dr. Warner[7] notes that Kunapipi (spelt "Gunabibi") is
● [114] one name of the Pythons which swallowed the Wauwalak; but, as
mentioned above, this writer stresses the importance of the Snakes
at the expense of the Fertility Mothers, and this element is by far the
most apparent in north-eastern Arnhem Land religion.

192 At Yirrkalla, the name Kunapipi is said to have two meanings.
304 First, the word Kunapipi means "whistle-cock" (that is, a sub-
83 incisure); for these ceremonies came up from the Rose and the
[171] Roper Rivers where subincision is general, whereas throughout the
greater part of north-eastern Arnhem Land only circumcision is
practised. The ceremonies of Kunapipi in the Yirrkalla region may
also be termed *wiri:i* or *wira'i*, meaning "incisure". But Kunapipi
means also the uterus of the Mother. That is, the incised penis sym-
bolizes the snake (Python or Rainbow Snake), and the incisure
itself the uterus. Symbolically, then, the subincised male member
represents both the female and the male organs, essential in the
process of fructification.

More generally, however, the term Kunapipi is said to mean the Mother, and in isolated cases the Snake, both being accepted versions. It is because Kunapipi is translated as Fertility Mother, through the greater part of the Northern Territory, that we have preferred to use that appellation.

794 A number of ceremonies throughout the northern half of the
Northern Territory are associated with Fertility Mothers and Rain-
796 bow (or Great) Snakes; and it is possible that the majority of these
cults are linked with one another, even if their outward expressions
184 are dissimilar. This aspect requires intensive study, including the
collection of mythological texts, and analysis of relevant ritual and
songs. The Kunapipi cult, however, consists of certain distinctive
elements, that are found throughout the areas we have mentioned.

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[7] L. Warner, *op. cit*, p. 294.

773 All of these were linguistic groups distributed among certain clans.

616 "Ah, what a lot of languages we talk," said the Li:alauwermiri.
197 "But although our languages are slightly different, we all share the same *mareiin* (*rangga* totemic emblems), and have the same ceremonies."

All the Pythons from the various *dua* groups called out ritually:
773 *'a: ! ko:kjei ! 'a: ! ko:kjei !* And the sound of their voices was like thunder.

Then the Wessel Islands Python asked the Li:alauwermiri Julunggul, "What have you had to eat?"

"I couldn't say", replied Julunggul.

"But you must tell me what you have had," insisted the other. The Li:alauwermiri was *gu'rungkngu* (that is, unwilling to answer correctly), and kept refusing to tell the other Snake. But at last the first Snake said: "I had a rock wallaby and a parrot fish."

"All right, I'll tell you what I had", the female Julunggul replied. "I had two nice little girls and a baby; they are in my body."

The others would not believe. They repeated, "We had a rock wallaby and a parrot fish."

"That is nothing", the Julunggul boasted, "we had those Wauwalak."

Then the Julunggul made a tremendous noise, called *muljulngo* or *du:ldo:n*, now part of the sound of the bullroarer. The two terms are now archaic.

* * * *

773 It is necessary to pause at this juncture, and comment on some of the aspects dealt with in this part of the myth.

114 In the first place, there are many versions of the Wauwalak myth,
● but the most reliable of these are contained in the elaborate song
831 cycles. The above version, which is outlined only briefly and has a number of appendices, differs in several minor points from that set out by Dr. Warner,[5] obtained in the vicinity of Milingimbi. For example, the Wauwalak Sisters in his version had already a child when they reached the outskirts of Muruwul (there termed Mirrirmina), and the younger sister gave birth to a baby on the way; both children were male. It was said that menstrual blood polluted the sacred well; while the Rock Python itself was male, called the Big Father. The flood theme, after the swallowing of the Wauwalak and the conversation of the various *dua* Snakes, makes its appearance in other versions which are not appended here.

The fact that the Rock Python, in the version we outline, is female (called by informants *jindi'ba:pi*, big/snake, and not *jindi'ba:pa*, big father: *ba:pi* and *ba:pa* may perhaps have been confused in Warner's version) is an important point, for it stresses the aspect of

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[5] L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 250–259. Since working at Yirrkalla in 1946–47, the writer has carried out additional research at Milingimbi (1950) into the Wauwalak mythology and songs. Certain local variations are found there, which it is proposed to discuss later in some detail.

fertility: the female Julunggul is big (as if she were pregnant) from 773
having swallowed the Wauwalak. Aborigines say: "There are two
Snakes, both Julunggul. One of these smelt the afterbirth blood and 114
swallowed the Wauwalak: this was the female. The other was her 831
husband, who stopped back in the well". According to another
version, both take part in the swallowing.

Nevertheless the female Julunggul, entering the hut in which the Sisters were crouching, symbolizes a penis, and her entry into the hut "is like a penis going into a vagina". The whole process of swallowing is interpreted by natives as an act of coitus. "It is coitus which causes female fecundity, expressed indirectly through the presence of the Wauwalak, as a transmutation of the great Fertility Mother, Djanggawul (mother of the Wauwalak)." The swallowing, accompanied by lightning and rain, serves to bring about the wet season (monsoonal period), the period of growth, and the renewal of animal, bird and vegetable life.

Another important point is the spraying of the Wauwalak by the Julunggul, before swallowing, with a "slippery" salival substance. This saliva is called *ngal*, which is also used for semen (also *ju:tu*, a term used generally for a child): the Julunggul sprays out the *ngal*, like an ejaculation of semen (with her head in the women's hut; that is, "penis in vagina"), and then swallows them (that is, coitus). Now, in the *djunggawon* and *kunapipi* rituals, actors are painted with white paint called *ngal* (*buru* or *buluk*), signifying the Julunggul's saliva or semen (*vide* Appendix I).

The erectness of the Julunggul and the other *dua* Pythons is the result of the swallowing (interpreted by informants as an erect penis). It is said that Julunggul and the other Snakes retained their upright positions only "because they had swallowed the Wauwalak and the other meat".

The noise made by Julunggul, after telling the *dua* Snakes she had 773
swallowed the Wauwalak, was (as mentioned) part of the sound of
the ritual bullroarer (termed also *julunggul* or *julunggir*, and *mumuna*; 114
this latter is the "outside" secular word used for both the bullroarer
and the Snake, called "Lightning Snake". It is also one name of the
Kunapipi or Kadjari Mother; this aspect will be mentioned again in
Chapters IX to XI). The rest of its sound was obtained from the
noise made by Julunggul, when she first sent out lightning which
split a tree; the wood from which the bullroarer is made symbolizes
a piece of wood that sprang out when the lightning hit the tree. The
bullroarer is used principally in the Kunapipi ritual, although also at [534]
times in the *ngu:rlmak*; its sound is said to be a "very happy one",
for Julunggul has just swallowed the Wauwalak. On the other hand,
in the *djunggawon* ritual when the *julunggul* "wooden trumpet" is
blown, the "light" sound of *brar ! brar !* signifies the Python's
swallowing.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951

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Some confusion exists as to how the afterbirth blood fell into the
773 sacred well of Muruwul. It is said by some that the older Sister went
114 down to the well to obtain water for drinking, and the blood dropped in while she was bending over. Others declare that the rain washed the blood into the well. The Julunggul, however, first smelt the proximity of the Two Sisters, and then the blood of the older. They had, according to the most reliable version, been camped at a swamp surrounded with "cabbage" or "wild coconut" palms, not far from Muruwul. It was here that much blood fell; when the rain began, the blood was carried down to the sacred well. A number of songs deal with this aspect.

Julunggul, so aborigines say, resembles an immense coloured caterpillar, *dapal*, with similar features and body, but without its numerous
[534] legs; the bullroarer is like this, particularly when it has been decorated with feather down fastened on with blood, and attached to a long cord of human hair twine.

* * * *

Since there are deviations in other Wauwalak versions, it is advisable to append the following two stories on the same subject; but the main theme is the same, and only the differences will be described in detail.

The two Wauwalak painted each other with boomerang designs[6]
773 before the birth of the elder sister's child.[7] When it was born, with the help of other unnamed women, the two started off for Muruwul. On arrival there the older sister partially built a bark hut called *murlk* (a sacred name, for this is the term for the hut placed on the ceremonial ground in the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi* and *ngu:rlmak* rituals). Her afterbirth blood was still intermittently flowing. The younger sister had, in the meantime, hidden herself in the surrounding grass. When the *murlk* was finished she came out, and began to dance along the track leading to the hut and to the well: she skipped along, shaking branches as she danced, just as the women dance to-day in the secular *djunggawon* and *kunapipi*. Coming near the mouth of the hut, she shook the branches, threw them aside, and entered; she sat down in there with her sister, and her sister's daughter. At the same time, she felt her menstruation blood running inside her from her breasts to her navel, down into the uterus, and flowing out. This had been caused by her energetic dancing, the movement of her hips, buttocks and legs. She had danced, too, the dance of the "spring water", the running streams of rain-water during the wet season,

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[778] [839]

[6] This design refers to the special boomerang used for ritual defloration (sometimes associated with ceremonial intercourse) on the Kunapipi ground; the Rose River Love Song Cycle treats this subject. *Vide*, also, Chapters IV and V.

[7] *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, Sacred Figures of Ancestral Beings of Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, pp. 314-317.

Wauwalak sheltered, and into which the Julunggul came, the *murlk* 773
symbolizes the uterus of the Mother (the Wauwalak or Djanggawul). 778
Old aborigines say: "You know, when the Julunggul went into the
hut, we mean that a penis is entering a woman's vagina, and this hut 796
is a uterus too: that is why we have it on the sacred ground, for it 346
reminds us that everything must come from the Mother's uterus.
That is how we came in the Dreaming; and people still continue to
come in that way, don't they? And why do we have that Julunggul?
Well, don't we have to have a penis to open up and inseminate the
woman, so that she can give birth to children? And when the
Julunggul swallows the Wauwalak, that is like a penis being swallowed by a vagina, only we put it the other way around. Now, when
we hold our big rituals, we do the very same things, because we want [789]
the seasons to come, and things to grow, and people to be born:
that is the real meaning of what we do".

The Kunapipi rituals have been described in some detail by Dr. 114
Warner (*op. cit.* pp. 290–311), and the reader is referred to this for
comparisons. We will mention only various features found in the 796
Yirrkalla region, indicating their relation to the Wauwalak mythology, and interpreting (from native explanations) the actions of the neophytes. It is beyond the scope of this work to record minute details of each stage of the ceremony, for this would entail description of dancing and many irrelevant actions, individual interpretations, and the whole interaction of men and women in and away from the sacred ground. Some of the Kunapipi songs, used both on the sacred ground and in the main camp, are given in Chapters VII and VIII, and these reveal certain details not treated here.

* * * *

The Kunapipi is held usually in the dry season, when food is 796
plentiful; for during this ceremony people are reaping the benefits of
performances held in the previous year, and at the same time are
preparing for the coming wet season and the subsequent growth of
food. Ceremonies may extend over a period of two weeks to two
months, and in unusual cases as long as two years. But now, when [797]
the Mission frowns on the Kunapipi and its attendant rituals, it may
be brought to a close after a few days with the result that much of the [177]
intricate symbolism is omitted. The principal Kunapipi leader is
usually a man of the Li:alauwermiri or an affiliated linguistic group, [614]
or one whose totemic *rangga*, *mareiin* objects, or song cycle are
associated with Muruwul sacred well and the Wauwalak. In the [616]
Yirrkalla region the Kunapipi leaders may have come from Rose
River, being members of groups which are in other respects culturally alien, or from *dua* clans near Rose River who have obtained the Kunapipi from further south.

right down. The girl's legs are tied to the posts, so that her legs are 831
outstretched between them. (We know of no other reference to the 794
actual tying down of the Kunapipi girl who has been chosen for 796
ceremonial coitus. As a young girl is specified, this probably refers [114]
to ritual defloration which has been mentioned briefly elsewhere—
vide Chapters IV, V and X. It suggests also that force is used to hold
the girl, a feature which should not normally accompany this rite;
moreover, promiscuity is such a feature of this area, with the breaking
down of indigenous regulations governing sexual conduct, that
one would not expect it to be necessary.)

The men then paint themselves, and line up for dancing. There may
be two or three hundred men on the sacred ground. The headman
begins to beat his clapping sticks, while the dancing men clap their
hands rhythmically to the music and song, and call out intermittently.
Then the first man, at the head of the long line of dancing men, leaves [833]
the line and goes into the shade and copulates with the Kunapipi girl;
the other men continue clapping their hands and calling out.

Under the girl, immediately beneath her vulva, a small depression
has been dug and in it has been placed a shallow paperbark dish;
this catches the semen and vaginal juices that come out of the girl.

When the first man has left the hut, another takes his place; this
is continued until all the men in the line have entered the hut and
copulated, and their semen has flowed from the girl into the paperbark
container.

By this time, the container is full; and after a rest, the men remove [302]
it from the hut and begin to paint themselves with the semen; then
they continue their dancing, which goes on from early morning until
sunset. Ceremonial coitus takes place each day for several weeks,
different girls being chosen for each ceremony." Other rituals relating
to the Kunapipi are also performed in a sequence similar to that
already discussed.

It should be mentioned that the reason given for thus decorating [842]
the postulants' bodies with designs in semen and vaginal juices is
the belief in the fructifying potency of the former. The act of [789]
ceremonial coitus is itself symbolic of fertilization, and the subsequent
increase of human and the natural species; semen is the
essence which causes pregnancy; and this natural and logical belief
is an integral part of the rituals of the Kunapipi fertility cult.

There is also an association between semen and the saliva of the [773]
Julunggul Snake (*vide* Chapter III, *et seq.*); it was with this substance
that Julunggul smeared the Wauwalak and the child prior to swallowing.
This "saliva" is represented by white pipe-clay in parts of [386]
the Kunapipi, and it is with this that Kunapipi neophytes are painted.

114 Since writing this book, the author and his wife have been able to spend a further period of anthropological research (1949-1950) in western Arnhem Land around Oenpelli, and in central-northern Arnhem Land about Milingimbi Island in the Crocodile Group.

At Oenpelli the complete series of Kunapipi rituals was seen twice through,
126 photographed, and descriptions recorded; to supplement this, a mass of data
was collected in relation to Kunapipi song cycles and mythology (mostly in
114 interlinear text). The Oenpelli rituals relating to this cult have been introduced
794 to this area within recent years, and were under the direction of ceremonial
headmen with Gunwinggu affinities, whose home territory lay further to the
south-east towards south-western Arnhem Land (the source of the Liverpool
and Wilton Rivers). The cult had been brought into north-central Arnhem
[177] Land from the south on the one hand, and from north-central Arnhem Land
via the source of the Liverpool on the other. The rituals witnessed by the author
were the first complete series ever performed at Oenpelli; a number of adult
[881] Gunwinggu men (otherwise fully initiated) passed through them as "novices",
being obliged to undertake all the customary and relevant obligations. The first
series was held about half-way through the monsoonal season, and the second
a little before the onset of the dry weather.

In the Milingimbi region full groups of songs relating to the Kunapipi were recorded, together with all relevant data.

The above will be discussed and presented in a future volume dealing with the regions concerned.

Foreword

194 themselves considered the Djanggawul to be the dominant figures in the Ancestral Times, and this attitude was borne out in the 126 reverence they gave and the attention they paid to all features relating to the Djanggawul. Even those of the opposite moiety, people who looked to Laintjung and Banaitja, admitted the primary importance of the *dua* Djanggawul. I was fortunate, during this period, in being able to examine and record a number of versions of Djanggawul mythology from a relatively wide range of informants, the majority of whom were ceremonial headmen for their particular linguistic groups, and in addition to record in detail the greater part of the associated song cycle. I was able also to attend most of the *dua nara* rituals that took place during my visit. My knowledge of these rituals and songs was considerably enhanced later after a further visit to the north-central region, Milingimbi, where the Djanggawul song cycle was again obtained in detail, and relevant rituals observed.

•114 The social organization and the culture of eastern Arnhem Land have already been treated partially in other works,[1] so that there is no need here for repetition. The reader is warned, however, that he will find it necessary to refer to these for information on various points such as the *dua-jiritja* moiety system, the clan and linguistic group organization, marriage rules, economic background and natural resources of this region, and so on, which although relevant 101 to this study cannot here be treated in full. Arnhem Land is to-day an Aboriginal Reserve in the north-eastern region of the Northern Territory of Australia,[2] and a similar cultural pattern extends from Blue Mud Bay in the south-east to Cape Stewart on the north-central coast. That is to say, all the Aborigines within this area (approximately 1,500 to 2,000) possess a common social organization and religious ideology, and speak varying dialects of one

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[1] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.*, 1937; also, by the same author, 'Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship', *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, 'Tribal Organization in Eastern Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4; A. P. Elkin, 'Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land', *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-16, and his 'The Complexity of Social Organization in Arnhem Land', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1-20; W. E. Lawrence and G. P. Murdock, 'Murngin Social Organization', *American Anthropologist*, 1949, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 58-65; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, and *University of Chicago Press*, 1950, pp. 20-7; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1951, Chapter I *b*.

[2] For its geographical position and natural resources, see A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 20-1, R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapter I *a*, and R. and C. Berndt, *Arnhem Land—Its History and Its People*, for publication, Cheshire, Melbourne. See also accompanying map to this volume.

severed parts became *rangga* or feathered strings, which are also 831
regarded as *rangga*. An interesting interpretation was made by one 776
informant, himself a ceremonial leader. Within historic times, he
said, a certain man was born with both vagina and penis, and with
breasts like a woman; he was bi-sexual and produced a child, after
which he died. Commenting on this example, which was told to
him by a grandparent, the informant suggested that these Djangga-
wul Sisters may have originally been bi-sexual, so that their clitorises
were actually penes which they used to impregnate themselves
by inserting into the vagina; for the 'clitoris-penes' were sufficiently
long to curve round and use for coitus. The same informant stated
that the Djanggawul Brother may possibly have been introduced
later. This is, however, the tentative interpretation of one man,
and does not represent group opinion.

The presence of elongated clitorises can possibly be explained 831
in terms of the tendency to accentuate a female organ (as has been 776
done in the case of the male); or they may, symbolically, represent
the umbilical cord (as in the Song Cycle). The former explanation 833
seems to be more probable, for much stress is placed on the erectness 839
of a woman's clitoris during coitus,[1] while the clitorises of many
Aboriginal women are fairly well developed; they are played with
and handled by women from pre-adolescent days, in an endeavour
to increase their size, so attracting the attentions of men and
heightening their sexual satisfaction. In other drawings from the 831
Yirrkalla area, the Djanggawul Sisters have long clitorises, dragging
on the ground. In one illustration we see the Two Sisters with 532
elongated clitorises, and the Brother with his long penis; they are 776
holding *rangga*, and people are coming out to be placed on a
ngainmara mat. The same drawing shows the Wauwalak Sisters,[2]
who are the daughters of the Djanggawul, while the Brother puts
his hand into the Sisters' wombs to remove the people. The Brother's
inserting his hand into the uteri, to remove the people (children),
is compared with his putting his hand into the *ngainmara* to remove
the sacred *rangga*. Further, it suggests that the Sisters did not
invariably give birth to such people in the normal way. The
Brother's action in inserting his hand merely accentuates the theme
by introducing a further point, which can be more easily repre-
sented in symbolism—that is, by the *rangga* and *ngainmara*, illustrating
the phenomenon of childbirth.

Professor Lloyd Warner was the first to note the presence of the 114
Djanggawul (which he called Djunkgao) cult, presenting this 794

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[1] *Vide* R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, for publication.

[2] The Wauwalak Sisters sponsor all *Kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon* ritual. *Vide* R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Chapters I *c*, III and IV.

114 794 material in his book, *A Black Civilization.*[1] The content of the myth which he presents will be discussed in the following chapter (3); here we are concerned with his analysis. He treated the Djanggawul in the same manner as he did the Wauwalak constellation. His opinion was that the Djanggawul cult was not so well integrated as that of the Wauwalak; and he wrongly assumed that it was merely one part of a larger cycle of stories centring around the movements of the ocean tides, and the floods of the rainy season.[2] This misinterpretation seems to have resulted from inadequate documentation. The myth and rituals, as he describes them, are incomplete, and the great song cycle is virtually ignored. However, even if we cannot accept Warner's assumptions concerning the significance and fundamental meaning of the cult, we must recognize the value of his descriptions, particularly as regards observational material, relating to the rituals.[3] Comparing the Djanggawul with the Wauwalak,[4] Warner concludes that both are very much the same in content. We, on the contrary, contend that although both have the same basic significance, stressing fertility, and being concerned with sexual functions and with peculiarly female characteristics, the relevant 'plots' are in themselves dissimilar.[5] They differ in many important details, which need not be tabulated here.

The essential distinction between the two is the fact that the Djanggawul are concerned with procreation, while the Wauwalak are, so to speak, interested in maintaining the *status quo*. The Wauwalak are not assumed to have 'brought into being' all life, as are the Djanggawul; they symbolically re-enact the situation, but are not the creators of it. In native epistemological doctrine this distinction is clearly defined. The Djanggawul came first, the Wauwalak later. It is, nevertheless, a debatable point whether or not the Djanggawul have influenced Aboriginal behaviour more than the Wauwalak. True, the latter have inspired at least three separate rituals; but to counterbalance this the Djanggawul remain aloof in inspiring the great *nara*, which in the ritual sense is much 'higher' than any of the Wauwalak ceremonies.

Warner, however, stressed the 'identification of the two myths and the fundamental sameness of the two rituals.'[6] The rituals do

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[1] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-56, 399-403, 406-7.

[2] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

[3] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 340-56.

[4] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 399-403.

[5] Compare the full Djanggawul myth presented in Chapter 2 of this volume with the Wauwalak mythology set out in *Kunapipi* (R. Berndt), Chapter III.

[6] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

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differ considerably, as do elements in the myths, but each does help us to understand the deeper significance of the other. The many totems that appear in the Djanggawul, and also in other myths, serve, as Warner also noted,[1] as concrete expression of the underlying concepts of Arnhem Land society, in its relation to nature and to its own institutions; and we find that these concepts are deeply embedded in the myth. They are thus part of the myth, and so subject to interpretation through ritual. But in Chapter 3 we shall discuss something of the Djanggawul's association with totemism. Totemism is relevant, but subsidiary, to the basic significance of the myth. The point that totemism is a philosophy and not a religion, that its manifestations in the ritual provide material crystallizations of religious concepts, must be kept in mind.

That the Djanggawul myth should express the fundamental idea of the backward and forward movements of the tides in the spring floods, either in the present era or in the mythological past,[2] is not made clear in Warner's discussion. The presence of water in the myth is quite a logical feature, for salt and fresh water, like tides and floods, are part of the environment; they are important in much the same degree as other natural phenomena. All of these are drawn into the underlying theme of the Djanggawul, for it is intimately concerned with all fertility, and with all the elements that make possible the continuance of the state of existence known to the Aborigines. That is to say, to bring about fertility (an aspect which, expressed consciously or otherwise, seems to predominate both in the minds of the natives and in their ritual symbolism), the sequence of the seasons must be assured; and this assurance, or the desire to attain it, is expressed symbolically in both myth and songs and materially in totemic manifestation. Warner suggests[3] that the rise and fall of the water in clan wells 'is something more than the symbolization of the flood as male and spiritual'. It is, according to him, 'an actual outflow of water from the sacred centres of the land, which causes the growth of new plants and animals and the refertilizing of the earth. It is the male principle fertilizing the earth.' This aspect receives some treatment in the myth and songs; and excluding his flood concept, and the idea that the male alone is 'spiritual' (a word, incidentally, which needs definition), this is very much what is actually involved. Warner, however, influenced by Durkheimian theory, by his ideas about ceremonial purification, and woman's ritual uncleanliness, has confused the

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[1] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
[2] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 402.
[3] *op. cit.*, p. 402.

114 issues. The concept that woman is profane, in comparison with
794 man the sacred, is not a feature of eastern Arnhem Land religious or lay thought.

The symbolism in the myth and songs makes clear the intentions
796 of the relevant ritual. In the *dua* moiety *nara*, as an expression
182 of the Djanggawul ideology, the major incidents of the myth are
[535] re-enacted in symbolic form. Much of this ritual is taken up with totemic dancing; and the animals, birds, reptiles and vegetable matter danced are totemic in so far that they relate directly or indirectly to the dominant theme. Further, these totems are not used only in relation to the Djanggawul, but are part of the spiritual heritage of the *dua* moiety linguistic groups and clans, which in turn are associated with the Djanggawul.

796 *Dua nara* rituals are all inspired by the Djanggawul, although at times irrelevant elements enter; for example, other *dua* spirits
616 or Ancestral Beings of minor importance become associated with the main theme, or *jiritja* moiety elements appear from time to time in the myth. But the Djanggawul are *dua*, and their ceremonies are solely of the *dua nara*, and not (as Warner mentions)[1] of both *dua* and *jiritja*. The latter are inspired by their own separate ideology, and by the Laintjung and Banaitja Ancestral Beings; and although similar in many points, they are basically different. However, it is the practice for some *jiritja* men (maternally related to the *dua* moiety) to help out *dua* postulants, or vice versa: and it is usual for both moieties to hold their own particular rituals at approximately the same time. At Yirrkalla, separate ceremonial grounds and separate huts are used by each moiety; but in the western Arnhem Land variant of the *nara* rituals the same ground is used, although each moiety has its separate hut (or shade), which may or may not adjoin that of the other. In eastern Arnhem Land, the ritual demarcation between the moieties is particularly noticeable.

796 The *dua*, and for that matter the *jiritja*, *nara* are the most important religious ceremonies of eastern Arnhem Land. Being far more
794 important that the *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag* and *djunggawon*, they are not
885 concerned with age-grading in the same sense that other initiation rituals are. They are primarily revelatory in character; and although novices are received, they are rather neophytes who are already fully initiated into manhood, and already possessed of a certain amount of religious knowledge. By the time a man sees his first *nara* he is well past adolescence, and usually married; he would normally be expected to have already seen the *ngurlmag*; and to be taking a major part in *djunggawon* dancing, as well as in that of the *kunapipi*, although the latter is optional.

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[1] *op. cit.*, p. 340.

bank of the billabong or beach; then, followed by all the other 796
members of the camp, they plunge into the water. Each person 535
washes himself (or herself), and invocations are called. They all
emerge, and the men dance various totemic fish.

This ritual act symbolically represents firstly the *rangga* (= people) 796
who become wet while being brought in the Djanggawul's bark
canoe from Bralgu. Secondly they, the people, are likened to *rangga*,
being plunged into the water (that is, when *rangga* are not in use,
or at the conclusion of the rituals, they are hidden in the water or
mud, and the people's bathing represents completion of the *nara*).
It has also been interpreted to mean that the Djanggawul enter 796
the water to collect fish in their net: *vide* myth, when the Two
Sisters enter the water and, opening their legs, bend forward to 831
use them as a fish-catchment. To catch fish in this way, using one's
legs as a net, is, moreover, symbolic of coitus: the fish caught are
penes (penis of the Djanggawul Brother).[1] Thus, men perform
the fish dances after emerging from the water. It also represents
the *rangga*'s being inserted into sacred waterholes and billabongs,
as was the habit of the Djanggawul; 'they put these *rangga* into wells
and so on, leaving them for the new generation.'

Warner[2] mentions that the ritual bathing represents the removal 796
of 'semen'; that is, through the 'incestuous rape of the younger
Sister'. This latter conception is not found in any of our versions. 831
Nevertheless, water may signify semen, and thus be a symbol of 114
fertility, just as is the 'foam' of the sea mentioned in the Song
Series. The assumption that the women cleanse themselves by
washing[3] does not follow from our versions; for all people bathe,
not only the women. The lay interpretation of any ritual bathing or
washing, whether involving complete immersion or just 'baptism'
by anointing with water (also fairly common), is cleansing or
purification, in the sense that the sacred aura (which is ritually
contagious, and can do harm if not controlled immediately after a
ritual), is, for the time being at least, diverted back into the 'eternal
stream' (see above). All sacred clan patterns painted on men's bodies,
and the complementary sacred patterns on the breasts of women,
are removed in this way, thus signifying that the *nara* is nearing
completion.

i. Again the 'higher' totem dances and *rangga* emblems are shown 796
to various neophytes in different stages of initiation. All these
ceremonies are revelatory in character. These rituals then are
divided into two main parts—1, those rituals shown to the younger

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[1] Also used in everyday speech to refer to coitus—thus a woman 'nets a fish'.

[2] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

[3] W. L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 333–4.

Chapter Three

THE CONTENT OF THE MYTH

This myth is further extended and elaborated on its arrival 773
in the Milingimbi region; but since we are considering only
the Yirrkalla version, the former will be retained for later
study.

Professor Lloyd Warner's version of the Djanggawul myth[1] 773
does not conform either to the Yirrkalla or to the Milingimbi
version, as recorded in song and in linguistic text from a wide 114
range of informants. It does, however, more closely approximate the latter, for there, as in Warner's version, only Two Sisters are mentioned and not the Djanggawul Brother. Apparently most of the beginning of the Djanggawul myth was unknown to Warner's informants, for their important journey from Bralgu and landing at Port Bradshaw are omitted altogether.

However, we shall treat first the points which bear some similarity to those mentioned in Warner's version. It is stated that 'our grandfathers came out from the wombs of these women',[2] by 'grandfathers' the natives meaning their original ancestors: but the significance of this remark is not noticed, and the theme of perpetual pregnancy is not treated. The section which relates how the Djanggawul Sisters lost their sacred emblems agrees in most major points, and in this way Warner's version helps to stress the important place held originally by the women, that is, their possession of all the sacred objects and of the power to perform all sacred ritual. This aspect is of fundamental importance when we consider the basic theme of the Djanggawul myth.

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[1] L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*, pp. 336–40.

[2] L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 337

The Content of the Myth

773 The statement that the Two Sisters 'hit themselves on each buttock so they could make plenty of people and their vaginae would grow
114 larger'[1] is quite different from what was mentioned in the Yirrkalla version. The point that their vaginae were small, and not large enough for sexual intercourse, is not found in the above myth. Warner mentions[2] that before their coming there was no land at all, and that they were responsible for making all the islands on the northern coast of Arnhem Land. This again does not conform. Nor does the section relating the incestuous 'rape' of the younger Djanggawul Sister; during the writer's recent work at Milingimbi, Aboriginal informants knew nothing of this. In the Milingimbi version, however, a certain amount of attention is paid to the stone *rangga* which was lodged in the vagina of the younger Sister.[3]

A most important point does appear in Warner's version, where he states that the Two Sisters, when they first came, carried the sun. 'They were the leaders of the sun'; it was just as though it belonged to them. 'In the beginning we had the sun, the water and those Two Women—nothing more.' The sun was first.[4] A close association is inferred here between the Djanggawul Sisters and the Sun (or suns)[5]; and this becomes clearer in the Milingimbi version which we shall present later. The fact that the two daughters of the Sun Woman may be the Two Djanggawul Sisters is further borne out by the sun's association with the red breast feathers of the *lindaridj* parakeets in which is symbolized the redness of the sun. Moreover, the sun's full disc at midday is termed *dagu*, *ganbai*, or *dala*, vagina or vulva, and it is from the vulvae of the Sisters that the sun's rays come (*vide* Milingimbi version of the Djanggawul).

773 The dominating feature of the Yirrkalla myth is fertility, the fact that the Djanggawul were responsible for producing the original
831 ancestors of the present Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land. This was their main function; but in treating it the myth offers a great deal of symbolism, in the way of mats, baskets and *rangga* poles, and emblems of male and female organs of generation. All the objects which the Djanggawul brought with them from Bralgu possessed life-giving qualities: the *ngainmara*, the eternally full uterus from which the people came; the *mauwulan*, which when plunged into the ground caused water to flow; and the *djuda* poles, from which grew flourishing trees. Associated with all these *dua* moiety emblems were strings of *lindaridj* breast feathers, symbolizing

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[1] L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

[2] L. Warner, *op. cit.*, pp. 336, 338 and 340.

[3] L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

[4] L. Warner, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

[5] *Vide* Footnote 2, p. 46; see also L. Warner, *op cit.*, p. 337.

121 gimbi in the north, and the Liverpool River country behind Oenpelli in the west and south-west, seems to be virtually uninhabited.

161 Although Arnhem Land covers a large area, its population has been assessed at only about four thousand. This includes Aborigines on Mission stations, where tentative census figures are available, while in regions away from direct supervision only approximate estimates have been made. There are only three large un-contacted areas in the whole of Arnhem Land: about the Liverpool and King rivers, and the mainland south of Milingimbi; the neighbourhood of Rose River; and the hills in the south-western corner of Arnhem Land. However, it is only in the first two places that Aborigines are to be found in any numbers, and both together probably contain no more than about a thousand people. These Liverpool groups have been gradually [166] displaced, within recent years, by the westward pressure of people from Cape Stewart and the south of Milingimbi, and many of them forced to fluctuate between Goulburn Islands, Oenpelli and the Buffalo camps. They would number today no more than approximately four hundred.

. . . . . .

● 114 This area, from Rose River in the south to Goulburn Island and Oenpelli in the west, has been mentioned in early literature, particularly by such travellers as Sir Mathew Flinders and Phillip King;[3] and in recent years various authors such as Ion Idriess,[4] Charles Barrett,[5] W. E. Harney,[6] Alan Marshall,[7] Carl Warburton,[8] Ernestine Hill,[9] Colin Simpson[10] and Clyde Fenton[11] have tended to over-glamorise Arnhem Land and its people.

The most important and detailed information concerning the historical and geographical background of Arnhem Land is not generally accessible,[12] although Alfred Searcy[13] provides some valuable notes and reminiscences. But despite some interesting references to the contact of Europeans with natives, these books and notes concern themselves very little with the local people and their lives.

Missionaries too have helped to add to the existing documentary evidence.[14] Professor Lloyd Warner[15] carried out social anthropological work in the Milingimbi region, and Dr Donald Thomson mainly in the Caledon Bay district,[16] and while Sir Baldwin Spencer[17] worked with natives on the fringe of western Arnhem Land, Professor A. P. Elkin has carried out field work principally in south-western Arnhem Land.

But although Dr Thomson's reports showed the disastrous 175
results of Japanese infiltration, nothing really effective was done 648
in respect of this until the end of 1941 brought war with Japan.
Then, at last, intercourse of these people with the Aborigines was
brought to a close.

Little has been said here concerning missionary enterprise in 177
Arnhem Land, a form of contact which has profoundly influenced certain aspects of native life, even though it has only a partial bearing on the main theme of this book. We shall refer
to this again in the following chapter. Another factor with which 177
we have not dealt concerns Prof. Lloyd Warner,[19] already mentioned, who carried out anthropological work, principally in the 114
Milingimbi area, between 1926 and 1929 – that is, before the epoch we have been considering in this chapter. This was the first detailed anthropological work undertaken in the Arnhem Land region;[20] and it is reasonable to suppose that his studies did, to some extent at least, influence native thought. He and his work were still remembered in 1946-47, more or less clearly, by natives along the coast from Milingimbi to Yirrkalla.

000 the Indonesians generally, and today their bad points are overlooked and the old days romanticised.

Dr Thomson (in *Recommendations of Policy in Native Affairs in the Northern Territory of Australia*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1937-38, p. 7) states: "Not only had the Malay or Macassar influence among these people extended over a very long period, but that these early voyagers who visited the North Australian coast each year with the north-west monsoon, were able to work with the natives of the Arnhem Land coast, to exert a profound influence upon their culture, which remains today, and to leave behind them a tradition of respect which the white man has unhappily not been able to inspire in his subsequent dealings with these people".

[24] Dr Thomson (*Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 12) has something to say on one aspect of this subject: "But an example of the danger of interference by strangers and the complications that may arise from ignorance of customary behaviour, was brought to my notice when a man in coming to me with a complaint about the Japanese invaders on the reserve told me that they knew no shame, for not only did they openly solicit women, but they solicited a woman in the presence of her brother. This is an incomprehensible thing to a native, the penalty for which would be death—although in the native society itself it is inconceivable that such a thing ever could occur".

Vide L. Warner, *op. cit.* p. 467.

776 [25] This conventionalised segregation of the sexes at Groote Eylandt, in the old pre-Mission days, is associated with the Spirit Woman Wuratilagu. She also made an appearance on the mainland, but her cult did not flourish there. However, she has been accepted and identified with another female spirit, and today is the subject of a long song cycle.

114 [26] Professor Warner (*op. cit.* p. 468) insists that (in 1926-29) alien contact made little impression on indigenous life. One must remember that most of his field work was carried out in the Milingimbi region and not in the north-eastern corner, centred about Yirrkalla, where there was then no Mission station. Even so, it is difficult to understand such statements as these: "It is surprising to the investigator to find little evidence of miscegenation among the blacks and Malays in north-east Arnhem Land". And "since the rapacious civilisation of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia". "The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in north-eastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridisation in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin (a term which Professor Warner uses for these people) civilisation. Compared with the total number of traits found in Aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilisation are very

few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout (canoe) complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilisation. 114 On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilisation remained very near to what is was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilisation to Aboriginal Australia". Just how Professor Warner arrived at this conclusion, with so much evidence pointing in the opposite direction, is beside the point in this study; and we shall not linger here in discussion of his statements.

[27] No cases were mentioned by Dr Strangman (*op. cit.*), nor directly 800 from this area by Dr Thomson. The latter mentions the danger of the introduction of such diseases from the East (by Japanese), but not specifically their occurrence in this region. (*Vide Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 15 and p. 16.) See also R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*.

[28] There is, of course, the incidence of leprosy, yaws, tropical ulcers, 164 etc., and the prevalence of such epidemics as measles, whooping cough, influenza, common colds and so on. The Aborigines have little or no immunity to such introduced diseases. (See also Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 16-17.)

[29] *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Native Labour and Welfare in the Northern Territory*, duplicated manuscript for private distribution, Sydney 1946, 113 pp. 68-71, 92-98, 100-102, 153-165, and 289-294.

[30] *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 155-190. Professor Warner mentions (pp. 155-6), ". . . polygyny is possible under present conditions only because of 114 warfare, and the resultant scarcity of women". The first part of this statement holds good for north-eastern Arnhem Land; but in the region from Arnhem Bay to Blue Mud Bay it was chiefly the male population which diminished as a result of warfare. Only occasionally were women speared. A detailed study of depopulation in relation to warfare, and its bearing on family life and sexual behaviour will be given later: see, for example, R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*.

Dr Thomson (*Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 42-44, and *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 6-15, 16 and 18) has mentioned the subject of depopulation in this region. His contention is that alien contact (principally Japanese and European), the breaking down of traditional ways, and the collapse of clan structure, together with introduced epidemics, have diminished the native population of this region.

[pp. 212-227 not processed]

First published 1949

114 (This monograph was awarded the Harbison-Higinbotham Prize for 1949 by the University of Melbourne. It formed part of the work for which the Royal Geographical Society of London awarded to the author the Cuthbert Peake Grant for 1948).

[p. iv]

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tensity of their relationship, gauged by the degree of totemic 616
inheritance. But these groups are certainly not tribes.[9]

The clan, or in practice its occupational group, the horde 614
(*vide infra* p. 12), is the most important unit of social 621
life in Arnhem Land. The clan is the territorial or land- 183
owning group, but the horde is the war-making group, and 626
each horde is to a large extent independent and self-govern- 888
ing. Anything approaching kingship or chieftainship is unknown in Arnhem Land. Law, order and discipline is laid down by tradition. It is defined in the mythology, and in the sagas of the culture heroes, and is maintained by public opinion, enforced by the old men, who act as custodians of the heritage of the clan. The authority of the old men is backed, in turn, by the *wäŋärr*, the totemic ancestors themselves, whose edicts are enforced by the threat of supernatural sanctions.

There is no individual ownership of land. Land owner- 423
ship is vested in the clan as the hereditary group, and as this 614
is a *patrilineal*[10] society, a man is born into his father's clan and has hunting rights over the territory of his own clan and generally over that of several others, particularly that

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[9] The arbitrary use of the term *Murngin*, "tribe", for the people [114]
of Eastern Arnhem Land, which was introduced by Professor W. [619]
Lloyd Warner (*A Black Civilisation*; New York and London, 1937) is particularly unfortunate, for as was pointed out (footnote 5) east of Cape Stewart in North Central Arnhem Land tribal organisation is conspicuous by its absence from the intricate social organisation of the area, although it appears again at Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and occurs along the Roper River. The word *murngin* has nothing to do with social organisation, and is in no sense the name of a "tribe".

[10] Descent, among the aborigines, in family, clan and certain other hereditary groups, is reckoned either in the male line, i.e. through the father, in which case it is called *patrilineal*, or through the mother, when it is called *matrilineal*.

6.

THE INFLUENCE OF INDONESIAN CULTURE ON THE IDEA OF WEALTH AND THE CEREMONIAL EXCHANGE CYCLE

174 Into the setting which has been described, superimposed upon this organisation, came the virile culture brought by the Indonesian visitors to the coast of Arnhem Land. We do not know when these visits first commenced or even who the first of the visitors were, but the evidence seems to indicate that they began at a comparatively recent date, ●[114] although probably considerably earlier than the time suggested to Matthew Flinders[45], who in 1803 met with a number of praus on the north-east coast of Arnhem Land at a place which he named in consequence "Malay Road", close to the English Company's Islands. The crews of these vessels which Matthew Flinders encountered came from the Gulf of Boni in the Celebes. They informed Flinders that people from that territory had made six or seven voyages to the coast of Arnhem Land during the preceding 20 years and that they themselves had been among the first to make the voyage. This, if correct, would place the date of the first Indonesian contacts at about 1783.

We know that these voyages continued regularly well into the present century, when they were apparently stopped

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[45] Op. cit., Vol. 2, page 231.

[174] brought articles of great material and social value, which
177 gave a special impetus and furnished the "drive", not only
431 for the circulation of *gerri* over hundreds of miles of
country, but which did much to overcome also the organised
"opposition" between clans.

● 114 These observations contrast strongly with the conclusions
177 of Professor W. Lloyd Warner[46] who states:
431
439 "The trade with the Malays seems to have been purely on a basis of exchange, with very little else in its social content. Nevertheless it had little effect on the aboriginal ideas of trade . . . The native sometimes exchanges things he possesses for the things he needs and cannot get from his own territory . . .

"All this," Warner considers, "again shows the strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence. The Malay trader came for an exchange of goods and nothing else; and it would be thought that, in the hundreds of years he is likely to have been in Arnhem Land, he would have given a new impetus to Murngin ideas of exchange. But as far as can be determined, the Murngin ideas are no different from what they were before he arrived . . ."

And again, after stressing the value of the iron axes brought to this territory by the Malays, Warner says, "It is unlikely that many iron axes ever reached the interior peoples." Of these axes he adds, "The substitution of the iron tomahawk (brought in as an article of trade by the Malays) for the stone axe can be understood, since the iron implement is a far more capable instrument, and a more important reason—the tomahawk was easily acquired and it was not necessary to learn how to make it. There was no arduous labour attached to collecting turtle shell to trade for an axe, for the shell came as a by-product to the pursuit of harpooning turtles. The making of the stone axe took time and a considerable amount of hard labour; but to go turtle hunting was a pleasure, since turtle harpooning expeditions are not only for the anticipated enjoyment of the flesh and to supply the family larder, but also for the pure joy of stalking the turtle, spearing it, and bringing it home to an admiring audience which could appreciate one's abilities as a hunter and a man of importance. Undoubtedly pride of workmanship is felt by a native axe-maker. His fellow tribesmen always express their appreciation of a well-turned-out axe or spear head, but the social approbation given to the two occupations is completely disproportionate." 114 177 431 439

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[46] W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilisation*, 1937, (pp. 458ff).

And again, in the continued use of the bark canoe by the people of Arnhem Land after the introduction of the *lippa lippa* by the visiting seafarers from the Celebes, Warner sees proof of the conservatism of the aborigine.

"The conservatism of Australian material culture is more or less demonstrated by the persistence of the bark canoe. Even today men who know how to make a dugout with outrigger equipment paddle their bark canoes across the open sea from island to island and from the various points of land . . ."

Professor Warner has missed entirely the tremendous importance of the impact of this Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of these people in his review of Malay or Macassar contacts with the people of Arnhem Land, from which the above extracts are quoted. And in his remarks on the ease with which the native acquired iron axes, and his comments on the conservatism surrounding the continued use of the bark canoe he tends rather to over-simplification.

There is no justification for the conclusion that the cul- 114 177

114 ture of the natives of North-eastern Arnhem Land showed
177 a resistance to the influence of this virile culture from Indonesia,
and certainly none for the statement that the ideas of
these people were "no different from what they were before
he (the Malay seafarer) arrived . . ."

121 I do not propose here to attempt a full review of the influence
177 of the Indonesian culture on the ceremonial life of
these people, but merely to show its effect on the ceremonial
exchange cycle and the economic system which
accompanies it.

177 That this influence was extensive is proved beyond question
192 by the fact (see pp. 67, 68f) that the term *muadäk*,
431 which gives its name to *kumur muadäk*, the northern sector
439 of the exchange cycle, is the collective or generic name
given by the natives to all the *gerri* which they obtained
formerly from the Macassar visitors, of which the chief
items are knives, axes of the type called *luŋa linya*, nails
(for fish hooks etc.), fish hooks and lines, bottle glass (for
scrapers), tobacco, smoking pipes (*pämatukka*), belts,
wooden dugout canoes, (*lippa lippa*), beads, (*männi-männi*),
and material such as calico, blankets, string and later, wool,
to which the collective term *mäthäkäl* was applied.

114 When Professor Warner contrasts the ease with which an
324 Arnhem Land native acquired an iron axe from the Malays,
135 with the labour involved in the making of the (admittedly)
431 much less efficient and satisfactory stone axe, he overlooks
463 certain important factors. First, that stone axes, like flint
spear heads, are made from special stone which occurs only
in restricted areas, and that while any man who merely
uses an axe to get wild honey, can grind the edge, the implement
itself is usually made initially by a craftsman, a
specialist in the working of the stone who lives in the
country in which it occurs, and like the smooth hard

114
pounding stones called *poipuro* (page 71) it is exported 135 324
as *gerri* within the ceremonial exchange system. 431 463

It is part of my thesis to show that an important function 182
served by the ceremonial exchange cycle is in supplying 431
this incentive, this motive for fine craftsmanship, the an- 324
ticipation of the ritual and pageantry, by adding romance or 463
"glamour" to work which would otherwise be drudgery. A man does not as a rule set out to manufacture a stone axe as he may a fish spear or a hunting spear, to satisfy an immediate need. Such an implement requires hours, even days, of grinding and polishing after the preliminary rough shaping of the hard stone. But, as it has been pointed out, these axes are made by a craftsman who probably learned the craft from his father and are accumulated as *gerri* which will be presented on some future ceremonial occasion to "pay back" a present that the maker has received from one of his exchange partners, or they are used to create an obligation which his partner will later discharge.

The stone quarry at ŋillipidji where *ŋämbi lirra* are [135
made, covers acres of ground, and hundreds, perhaps thou- 316]
sands, of spear heads come from the quarry in the course of a year. Like the stone axe heads, these flint heads are not made for immediate use, but are passed from Wagilläk territory—in bundles of a dozen or so, each wrapped neatly in the paperbark sheath called *djalk*—to reciprocate ceremonial presents of *muadäk*, or to build up goodwill and prestige. Big bundles are sent north and north-west, in the knowledge that they will be reciprocated ultimately with other *gerri* of a traditional kind and of at least equivalent value.

From the orientation of a man of Mildjiŋi clan of the 182
Glyde River, the people to the north who occupy the terri- 431
tory along the northern shoreline, at Glyde Inlet, and Banyan 438

177 sacred totemic design called *tärrupoŋon*—comprising
431 clouds in highly conventionalised form—which the people
532 say were reflected on the wet surface of the old square-
778 faced bottles when they were found, wet and glistening, cast up by the sea. So that for Mildjiŋi, the bottle, which is regarded as part of the heritage from the Macassar visitors, had a double interest. It ranked among *kumur muadäk gerri* for ceremonial exchange and as an ordinary "*wäkkinŋu*" (non-sacred) manifestation of the *butulo*, which mythology tells them was brought, in ancestral times, by the Munäŋa, the Macassar seafarers, and which therefore gives the people a charter for the adoption by Mildjiŋi clan of *butulo* as a ceremonial totem.

● 114 Here is proof, not only of the recognition of the social
177 value of bottles, which in former times were valued greatly
431 as material for scrapers, but also a refutation of Warner's statement as to the conservatism of Arnhem Land culture and what he has termed the "strong resistance of the Murngin culture to outside influence". The example quoted is only one instance of an influence which has been widespread in Arnhem Land culture.

To suggest that it is unlikely that many of the iron axes which were brought by the Malays would reach the interior people, is to underestimate the dynamic effect of the impact of this virile culture on the people of Arnhem Land. In 1935 I made a long patrol on foot across Arnhem Land, and I remember well seeing, on the wall of a rock shelter, far inland, the drawing of an iron axe of the special type called *luŋa linya*, brought in former times by the Macassar people. At the time I felt some surprise, but this feeling disappeared with the subsequent discovery and understanding of the operation of the ceremonial exchange system

[P.412]

MARRIAGE AND DESCENT IN EAST ARNHEM LAND

By A. P. ELKIN

611 MR. THEODOR WEBB'S article on "Social Organization in East Arnhem Land"[1] supplies evidence for the existence of a
114 rule of descent which is very interesting and at the same time unusual in Australia. He states that "the moieties are determined by patrilineal descent, but the subsections by matrilineal descent." Perhaps it would be better to say that the descent of the moieties is patrilineal, while the descent of the subsections, which are divided between the moieties, four in each, is indirect patrilineal; but there is a proviso that in the case of alternate marriage, of which there is a regular scheme, the children belong to the subsection of the father's moiety to which they would have belonged had their *actual mother* been regularly married according to the strict subsection rule. Thus, the father is "thrown away" as far as the subsection is concerned.

617 Now, the subsection from which the alternate wife comes,
582 belongs to the same section as the subsection of the regular wife. This may be put graphically as follows (the usual *Oceania* symbols
611 are used):

$$A^1 = B^1$$
$$A^2 = B^2$$
$$C^1 = D^1$$
$$C^2 = D^2$$

A man of subsection A^1 normally marries a woman of subsection B^1, and his children belong to subsection D^2. But he may marry a woman of the other subsection of section B, that is B^2; if he does so, his children belong to D^1 and not to D^2. This is what follows if a woman of B^2 were married to a man of A^2, her regular spouse, and bore him children. If, on the other hand, a man of A^2 married a woman of B^1, his alternate wife, the children are no longer D^1, but D^2. Such is the scheme of descent for all the marriages, regular and

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[1] *Oceania*, III, 406-411.

alternate, between the subsections. As far as the sections are 617
concerned—ignoring the two subsections into which each section 582
has been divided—the normal rules of marriage and descent are
followed, namely, $\left(\begin{matrix}A = B\\ C = D\end{matrix}\right)$, and this was the conclusion of 611
W. Lloyd Warner, who worked in the same region as Mr. Webb.[2]

But Mr. Webb's article reveals a most interesting feature of 617
the subsection system in East Arnhem Land, namely, that the cycle 582
of a man of any one subsection is not completed until by marriage
and descent all eight subsections have been gone through, and until 611
by descent alone all four subsections of his own moiety have been 114
gone through. In the typical Australian subsection system, however, the cycle is completed by going through four of the subsections in marriage and descent, and two of the man's own moiety in descent only. To put it in another way, in the East Arnhem Land system as described by Mr. Webb, a man and his son's son do not belong to the one subsection, as is the case in the typical systems; the first descendant that belongs to the man's own subsection is his son's son's son's son. Or to use the usual symbols, in the typical system a man of A^1 marries a woman of B^1 and has children D^2; his son, D^2, marries a woman of C^2 and his children are back in A^1. But according to the table provided by Mr. Webb the cycle is: a man of A^1 marries a woman of B^1 and has a son D^2; the latter marries a woman of C^2 and has a son A^2 (not A^1 as in the usual systems); he then marries a woman of B^2 and has a son D^1, who marries a woman of C^1 and his children belong to A^1. According to this rule a man and his son's son cannot marry women of the same subsection, except in the case of an alternate marriage, for they belong to the two different subsections of one section. But in the case of an alternate marriage A^1 marries a woman of B^1, and his son D^2 marries a woman of C^1 instead of C^2, and so his children belong to A^1, the subsection of their father's father.

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[2] "Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2, 184.

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Using the East Arnhem Land subsection terms as well as the usual symbols, the system may be tabulated as follows:

A^1	Ngarit	=	Balang	B^1
A^2	Bulain	=	Buralang	B^2
C^1	Warmut	=	Kaijark	D^1
C^2	Karmerung	=	Bangardi	D^2

The sign = connects intermarrying pairs of subsections, and the arrows the subsections of mother and child. It should further be remembered that the subsections Ngarit, Bulain, Kaijark and Bangardi together form the Yiritja patrilineal moiety, while the Balang, Buralang, Warmut and Karmerung belong to the Dua moiety. The above table depicts the regular scheme of marriage and descent according to Mr. Webb; an alternate marriage could result in shortening the cycle, as already explained.

In the descent of the subsections Webb differs from Warner, who gives the normal rule of marriage and descent in East Arnhem Land to be the typical Australian rule; that is, in the case of regular marriages a man and his son's son belong to the one subsection, while in alternate marriage descent depends on the mother alone. Indeed, Warner goes further and says that the descent of the subsections always depends on the mother, is matrilineal, and never bi-lineal. He further states that a man of either of the two subsections (say A^1 and A^2), which together make up one section (A), may marry into either of the subsections (B^1 and B^2), which together make up the other member of the intermarrying pair of sections (such as A and B).[3] Webb, however, says that the rule is for A^1 to marry B^1, though under certain circumstances he might marry B^2. Now this would appear to be the case, for as Warner points out,[4] the marriage rule is with mother's brother's daughter, and normally speaking the mother's brother's daughter of A^1 belongs to B^1, that is, to A^1's regular intermarrying subsection, according to Webb's table of marriage and descent. But according to Warner's formula,[5] which expresses the typical Australian subsection system, such as we find

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[3] W. Lloyd Warner, *op. cit.*, 184-185.

[4] *Op. cit.*, 188.

[5] *Op. cit.*, 184.

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amongst the Northern Aranda and others, a man of East Arnhem Land could only marry his correct spouse. that is, his mother's brother's daughter, if he married into the alternate subsection (B^2), unless his mother's brother (C^2) had married his "alternate spouse" (D^1 instead of D^2). It should be remembered that one function performed by the normal and usual subsection system is to put cross-cousins into a different subsection from certain second-cousins (the children of mother's cross-cousins, *etc.*), and to put the latter, and not the former, into the subsection with which a person's own subsection regularly intermarries. Thus, in the usual Australian systems, the cross-cousins of A^1 are classed in subsection B^2, with which subsection A^1 does not intermarry. In other words, the subsection system is normally associated with the prohibition of cross-cousin marriage and with the rule of marriage with the daughter of parents' cross-cousin, own or tribal. But the whole point about the East Arnhem Land system is an association of subsections with a rule of marriage with the mother's brother's daughter. That obviously means that under a normal observance of the kinship marriage rule the rule of the descent of the subsections cannot be the same as in those tribes in which subsections are really part of the machinery for preventing cross-cousin marriage. Now, Mr. Webb's table of the marriage and descent of the subsections just shows how this association of subsections and matrilineal cross-cousin marriage can be worked. It is done normally by a cycle which, as we have seen, runs through the whole eight subsections, and not only four of them.

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Mr. Webb's account of the descent of the subsections must, of course, be carefully checked, but there does not seem to be any reason for doubting its accuracy. It seems to be based on first-hand information from the natives whom he knows well, and apparently it has not been affected by any attempt to make it fit any theoretical formula of the working of subsection systems. Moreover, the fact that Mr. Webb does not even mention the kinship marriage rule probably strengthens the value of his evidence for the bare working of the subsection system in his region. In other words, Mr. Webb's account does not seem to have been in any way the result of theoretical considerations. Mr. Warner, on the other hand,

617 seems to be passing over the larger cycle of the marriage and descent
of the subsections, and merely treating the system as one of four
582 sections; indeed, he almost ignores the subsections.[*] But the
611 subsection system seems to be quite important in this area; it has
totemic significance, it is used in daily conversation almost as much
114 as the kinship terms, and it is of great value in ascertaining relationship and the associated modes of behaviour at inter-tribal gatherings. It is not therefore an unimportant subdivision of the four sections in East Arnhem Land any more than it is, say, in East Kimberley. Indeed, it is so important that it has been most carefully arranged to fit in with a rule of marriage with the mother's brother's daughter. Theoretically, this has been regarded as impossible, as, of course, it is, if the typical rule of the marriage and descent of the subsections be adhered to. The aborigines of this area were not so bound by theory, and faced with a practical problem, they seem to have solved it in a most ingenious manner by doubling the normal length of the cycle. The anthropologist finds in this another reason for not underestimating the intelligence of the Australian aborigine.

A. P. ELKIN

A NOTE UPON A SIMILAR SYSTEM AMONG THE NANGIOMERI

By W. E. H. STANNER

000 DURING the course of my field work in the Daly River–Fitzmaurice River district of North Australia in 1932 I spent two or three weeks among the Nangiomeri tribe, whose true historic location is about 60 to 100 miles south-west of the white settlement on the Daly River, where the few remaining members of this tribe now live. The Nangiomeri possess a kinship system of a type closely related to that reported by Mr. Webb and upon which Dr. Elkin's interpretative article is based. I imagined at the time of my discovery and recording of the Nangiomeri system that it might be purely a localized phenomenon, but its occurrence in Arnhem Land, many hundreds of miles away, makes this variant full of important implications for the general theory of Australian kinship. This note is therefore appended to Dr. Elkin's article.

The Nangiomeri have been until recently a tribe without sections, subsections, moieties, or any named or unnamed divisions whatever. They probably once possessed a form of patrilineal totemism. Their kinship system was of general Kariera

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[*] *Op. cit.* On a chart facing page 187, Warner simply uses the symbols $A^{1\,2}$, $B^{1\,2}$, $C^{1\,2}$, and $D^{1\,2}$, so that the subsection signs are valueless.

756 magical rites and spells, it does not involve the co-operation
[788] of spirit familiars.

The majority of informants stated that the cult of the
marrngit is not a hereditary one, and they asserted that
although the son of a *marrngitmirri* father may also be
marrngitmirri, membership of the cult does not necessarily
[617] pass from father to son. But at least one informant of
Wanguri clan, a clan of Mindjikai *barpuro*, declared that
[828] in his own clan, of which the principal territory is at
Arnhem Bay, a little to the south and east of Elcho Island,
the cult of the *marrngit* was hereditary and did pass from
[124] father to son. On controversial issues of this kind, long
discussions often took place among the old men who acted
as informants, and finally they would reach agreement and
give me their verdict. Far from being careless or merely
anxious to please, they took great pains to check information
by referring to people who possessed specialized
knowledge, and took much trouble in settling any doubtful
point. My informants declared that the *marrngit* was also
hereditary in the Burara tribe, where, however, the cult of
the *ragalk* was also established and was certainly dominant.
184 Some conflict, or difference of opinion, does occur in
matters of this kind particularly in north-eastern Arnhem
Land where there is no hard and fast, or orthodox, view,
supported by a large body of opinion.

This means that, as might be expected, in the absence of
a written language or an organized body to formalize
belief, there is necessarily some degree of flexibility, some
scope for individual ideas, and within the atypical,
intensely segmentary, social organization of eastern
Arnhem Land, this variability tends to be emphasized.
Even in matters of kinship, which concerns the entire
group, since it regulates all behaviour, differences some-
[888] times occurred and the people would call in old men and
submit an intricate or knotty problem to them in the way
that I have mentioned above.

121 It was intended originally to confine this paper to a short
account of the *marrngitmirri*, translated from the statements
[756 of the medicinemen themselves, and to follow this with
776] descriptions of the *marrngit*, which are shown in the
accompanying plates of actual drawings of their spirit
familiars made by these medicinemen. But my attention has
[114] been drawn to an article by the late Revd. T. T. Webb
published some years ago, 'The Making of a Marrngit,'[3]
which contains some errors and misconceptions, and I have
therefore extended the scope of this article to discuss the
relationship of the medicineman and sorcerer in Arnhem
Land and the roles and the distribution of these cults.

756 In the opening paragraph of this article Mr. Webb says:
754 'In east Arnhem Land there are two classes of magicians

[p. 97 (C)]

754 speak and to hear most of what was said except when it was idiomatic or spoken very quickly, I made the following note: 'The cult of the *kalka* or *ragalk* properly belongs to the area of Arnhem Land extending from the Burara of Cape Stewart westwards. It did not exist as a cult to the east of this territory, although greatly feared by these people, but it was an important influence to the west as well as among the interior tribes, the Raimbar'ngo, the Ritar'ngo and others from the Derby Creek, lying south and west of Cape Stewart and the Liverpool River.'

And to this record, the following significant note was added: 'It was unknown to the Tjambarpoingo, the Kalbanuk and to most of the Mandjikai—the "sandfly people"—with the exception of the Wallamango, the latter a people of the Crocodile Islands who claim affinity with Mandjikai *barpuro*.' Wanguri clan is also linked with the same group. *Barpuro*3 is a term that is difficult to define in the intricate and aberrant social grouping of this area.
617 It is applied in eastern Arnhem Land to loosely integrated clans often occupying discontinuous tracts of territory, geographically sometimes widely separated, but nevertheless having in common at least some vital and significant part of their total totemic heritage.

124 The immense complexity of this social grouping caused many lengthy digressions among informants and frequently interrupted the collection of long texts in the language to enable difficult points as to the bonds between groups to be clarified and the resultant effects upon the attitudes of
754 people made clear to me. Because the cult of the *ragalk* or
184 sorcerer was known to the Yanango of Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group—a clan of Maringo *malla*—who were on the borderline between the east and the west, with many cultural differences as well as differences in social organization, the impact of the *kalka* upon them was not as sudden or as destructive as it was upon the people of Elcho Island. My informants stressed the fact that the Ritar'ngo of the interior, who occupied a big area of country lying between the Liverpool River to the north and the Wilton (a tributary of the upper Roper) in the south, knew and practised the cult of the *kalka*, as did their neighbours the Raimbar'ngo.

It will be clear from the foregoing that the two cults, the cults of the *marngit* and the *kalka*, are not generally
● [114] complementary and do not, as Mr. Webb's account implies, occur together among the same people, with the possible exception of the Yanango and Wallamango and the neighbouring Burara. But the Yanango and Wallamango are marginal groups and this has an important influence upon their attitudes towards certain culture traits, and the emphasis placed upon differences tends to exaggerate these.

756 The more or less benevolent *marngitmirri*, the typical medicineman, a kind of general practitioner, with his spirit familiars, is characteristic of the region east of the Crocodile Islands, extending to Cape Arnhem, where the cult of the
777 *ragalk* does not exist.

754 I have stated that prior to the transfer of the Mission
177 from Elcho Island west to the Crocodile Group, the people
184 of the Tjambarpoingo (*dua* moiety) and Kopapoingo-

[P.98(B)]

753
776 originally by the Djangauwo sisters—women culture
[773] heroes, who, in their progress across east Arnhem Land,
thrust their yam sticks into the ground as they walked.
From each of the holes caused in this way there gushed a
spring of water of a special kind called *milmindjarrk*.
Certain tabus restrict the drinking of *milmindjarrk* water
and my informant Nyarrang declared that the swelling on
his neck was due to ritual punishment in the form of a
blow from the *malli* of the heavy *birlma*, used by the
Djangauwo sisters whose spirits still preside over *milmindjarrk*
waters. Some time later, the effect of the blow from
the *malli birlma* had become manifest in the form of a
swelling. It is characteristic of these people that when
'something is wrong,' when they receive a warning in the
[787] form of an omen or portent, or when 'bad luck' attends
their hunting or fishing expeditions, they look back over
their lives for some incident which has caused them
[152] uneasiness or concern and which they feel may have
incurred the displeasure of the *malli wangarr*, the spirits of
the ancestral culture heroes.

756 The role of the *marrngitmirri* is twofold: first, to diagnose
sickness or to determine the cause of death, and secondly
[776] to find a scapegoat by the aid of his *marrngit*—who, being
spirits or ghosts, possess occult powers, powers to see
[787] things not visible to mortals, which they communicate to
the *marrngitmirri*, who in turn passes the information to the
kin of the victim. As a rule the verdict of the *marrngitmirri*
[682 is accepted without question and the people proceed to
593] select an avenger. This will be a person within the kinship
horizon of the deceased—sometimes a younger brother but
often a more distant relation from a clan to which, under
an extension of the kinship structure, he has special
obligations, which may be reciprocal.

In the marginal area adjacent to the Burara, *i.e.* close to
the territorial stronghold of the *ragalk*—the *marrngitmirri*
[754] looks at once for signs of the tell-tale magic of the dreaded
kalka, just as a man does when seeking the reason for what
he accepts as ritual punishment.

754 Even in the culturally homogeneous area of north-east
756 Arnhem Land, the beliefs and ideas about the *marrngit* and
marrngitmirri, as well as about *ragalk*, vary considerably—
114 necessarily so, in a matter which is strongly subjective. The
foregoing reference to the role of the *marrngitmirri* discounts
Webb's statement (*loc. cit.*) that this man 'possesses no
special influence in the life of his horde or tribe.' It must be
apparent that at critical times, when the sentiments of the
[753 kin of a sick or newly deceased man are aroused as they
are by the pronouncements of the *marrngitmirri* (which,
761] backed by belief in his *marrngit*, are accepted without
question), his influence on the horde in which he lives is
one of life and death.

The Kalka *at Work*

754 The *kalka* or sorcerer is believed to be responsible for
753 bringing about the sickness and ultimate death of his
761 victim but he does not profess to diagnose sickness or
injury due to magic, which is the role only of the *marrngit*.
In practice, *kalka* may operate singly but more generally
they work in groups of two or three. A sorcerer is likely

756 776 remaining with him all night. None of the medicinemen that I met in east Arnhem Land claimed to have a single *marrngit* only, and the number varied from two to four or five or even more, as in the case of Wilindjango, who had six (Plate J*b*).

[787] The *marrngitmirri*, as he gains experience in the cult, is able to see on the body of a victim of secret killing spear wounds which are not visible to ordinary people.

As the drawings in colour in Plates I and J indicate, there is a considerable variation in the concepts of the *marrngit* entertained by the *marrngitmirri*, but all agreed that these are *wakkinngu*—profane, in the sense of non-sacred, with the special implication that they are not associated with, or dedicated to, the *wangarr*, and so not subject to ritual or supernatural sanctions. The *marrngit* and their cult are regarded, therefore, by the natives of Arnhem Land as apart altogether from totemism. This essential distinction was pointed out to me by my informants themselves. They emphasized it frequently by referring to their *marrngit* as *warrakan*—animals—a term that they never used for their totems, except in reference to the actual animal form which the totems sometimes assumed in ancestral times—for, being *wangarr*, they had supernatural powers and were not subject to the restrictions and limitations of ordinary men. They were *wangarr*, hence supernatural.

The people always described their totems as *malli wangarr*—the spirits or shades of the ancestral culture heroes—and therefore, *yarkomirri*, literally with, or having, a name, dedicated ceremonially to the *wangarr*. On
782 ceremonial occasions the obligatory presentations of *ngata* (food) are dedicated to the *wangarr* concerned by the *dalkarramirri*, who acts in the role of high priest. And
774 because of their association with the *wangarr*, all totems or totemic objects are subject to supernatural sanctions and are still watched over by the *malli* of these *wangarr* who guard jealously the observance of the rituals associated with the heritage that they left behind.

771 The demarcation between what is sacred and what is profane, between *yarkomirri* and *wakkinngu*, emphasizes the recognition by these people of the essential distinction between *marrngit* and totem, between religion and magic.

Notes

● 114 [1] The data presented in the paper were obtained when I was under commission by the Commonwealth Government in Arnhem Land, prior to the war, and during the war while O.C. Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit, Norforce.

113 [2] *Oceania*, Vol. I, 1936, pp. 336–41.

[3] See Donald F. Thomson, 'Two Painted Skulls from Arnhem Land, with Notes on the Totemic Significance of the Designs.' MAN, 1939, 1.

774 826 [4] *Tortork* is heart in the strictly anatomical sense, but some of my informants declared that it was also the seat of the *malli*, or shade, a kind of non-material or spiritual manifestation, which has nothing to do with the shadow.

[p.102(B)]

PREFACE

greatest of the Reserves and is in the north of the Northern 131
Territory. Its northern shores are washed by the Arafura 657
Sea; on the east it is bounded by the Gulf of Carpentaria; and to the south lies the barrier of high, impenetrable, barren sand-stone mountains and deep gorges. Approximately thirty-four thousand square miles of this desolate country, with its aboriginal population of three thousand, was declared an Aboriginal Reserve in 1931. [161]

The writing of this book has entailed the collecting of notes, incidents, myths, and nomads' quaint sayings, which I have jotted down on scraps of paper or on the fly-leaves of books I have had with me in the bush, in aboriginal canoes, or on luggers. 114 In the spelling of aboriginal names and phrases I have not used any system of phonetics, but have attempted to give ordinary English letter values. 104 'Yulengor' is a general race-term applied by Stone Age men of east Arnhem Land to all nomads, in the way that we refer to them as aborigines. 'Yulengor' is not used elsewhere. 101

I gratefully acknowledge help given by Professor A. P. Elkin who prepared the illuminating introduction. 000 But for my wife the notes would have been offered to the public years ago, and she has my thanks for the wisdom of such restraint, and for encouragement and constructive criticism as I have attempted to convey to the printed page the fascinating customs, unforgettable experiences, and mind-teasing Yulengor sayings of Arnhem Land.

W. S. C.

Brisbane, 1956

Introduction

BY PROFESSOR A. P. ELKIN

Few people had any interest in north-eastern Arnhem Land, 648
Northern Territory, until 1933. The Aborigines killed five Japanese towards the end of the preceding year, and in 1933, two white prospectors, two beachcombers, and also a member of the police party which had been sent out to arrest the murderers of the Japanese. It seems that in the first place the natives had received some provocation, which justified their subsequent actions, at least in their sight, if not in ours. In addition, they resented the intrusion of yellow and white strangers into their country, who came to satisfy their own interests, not to help the natives./

In some similar situations in other parts of Australia, punitive expeditions have been sent out, resulting in dire consequences for many innocent Aborigines, and the creation of antagonistic attitudes between white and black. Fortunately, wiser plans prevailed; indeed, public opinion, 797 648
enlightened by the determined views of Missionary and Aborigines' Protection Societies, demanded that they should prevail. It was obvious that some type of buffer should be established in the eastern part of this corner of Arnhem Land, to stand between the native on the one hand, and the occasional intruder on the other hand. The area was an Aboriginal Reserve, but it could not be patrolled in such a way as to preserve its inviolability; it is difficult, out-of-the-way country. Moreover, the best buffer would be one of a permanent nature which would reveal the white man as one desirous of serving the native, not just making use of him or his country.

The Methodist Missionary Society provided this buffer [114]

[p xiv is blank]

114 797 [648] by sending a missionary and his wife, who in 1934 selected Yirrkala, near Cape Arnhem, as a suitable centre from which understanding and friendship could radiate out into those parts of the region not influenced by Milingimbi, 150 miles to the west, and the Groote Eylandt Mission, 140 miles to the south.

This missionary was Wilbur Chaseling, the author of this book, readers of which will realize that an excellent choice was made. Mr and Mrs Chaseling did not have time to [122] take the course in Anthropology in the University of Sydney, for the need to go north was urgent; they could only attend a few times and discuss their work with myself. This book, however, and later talks which I have had with Mr Chaseling show two things: first, that he had the facility to get to know and understand his native people, their culture and manner of life, and second, that he used and applied this knowledge in working out his missionary objectives and methods. Thus, one objective which he set himself was 'to preserve native culture, to encourage the revival of old ceremonies and to preserve in the natives an appreciation of their own social organization'. At the same time, he realized that some customs (such as infanticide and 'warfare') had to be discouraged, while, along with agriculture and medicine, the Christian faith had to be presented in a way that could be understood, and understood, not as a contradiction of, and judgement on, the past, but as its fulfilment.

114 Mr Chaseling's book is a readable and simple introduction to the life and faith of a primitive food-gathering people. It provides a real insight into their minds and everyday happenings. An anthropologist might examine and discuss more theoretically (and boringly) various aspects of the social organization or ritual life, but limited as he is to a couple of visits totalling about twenty-one months, he could not provide that wealth of illustrations and incidents which the observant missionary who spends several years in the

region can note. It is for this reason that Mr Chaseling's 114
book will be read by others besides the general reader.

In the rest of this Introduction, I draw attention to a few 128
of the significant facts in the life of the north-east Arnhem Aborigines, and also to some of the important points made by Mr Chaseling.

Aboriginal Relationship System and Intelligence

North-east Arnhem Land is a very interesting region from 571
the anthropological point of view. As elsewhere in Australia, the basis of social behaviour is the kinship or relationship system. According to this everyone is related to everyone else. This relationship, however, is not expressed in a 601
multiplicity of terms which express the exact relationship between any two individuals. Instead, only about two dozen terms are used, with the result that all one's relations, that is, everyone in the region, are divided up into twenty odd groups or classes of relations. Thus, in one class the Aboriginal includes his own mother and her sisters and also a number of other women, mostly her cousins, and to all these people he applies one term, the term which includes and means 'mother'; the term 'sister' includes not only the daughters of his father's brothers and of his mother's sisters (these are sometimes referred to by students as parallel cousins), but also the daughters of certain of his parents' cousins; and so on with the other terms. This is the classificatory (or classifying) form of kinship system. It does not mean that an Aboriginal does not know his own mother, or father, or son, or father's father, and so on; he does know them—indeed, he is very good at genealogies. Its im- 601
portance is that the terms used by two people of one another 602
indicate the kind of behaviour they adopt toward each other—whether, for example, they can sit near one another, speak to one another, see or marry one another, and what is the obligation with regard to gifts and mourning with

so it is with man's spirit. Moreover, according to native 779
psychology, a man has two souls, and according to some 775
beliefs, it is a man's bush or trickster spirit which goes to the 614
Island of the Dead. But however that be, the more im- [774]
portant of these two spirits of the dead does sojourn in the [764]
totemic well, and to make sure that the spirit arrives there, [778]
signs are made by pointing and singing to the grandfather to come for him. As one informant told Dr Warner, who studied the subject intensively, 'if we didn't sing, he might go bad because evil ghosts might catch him and take him out in the jungle country where they live. It is better that his old grandfather and his ancestors come and get him and take him straight to his clan well where his totem came from.'

Religion

Readers of Mr Chaseling's book will be impressed by the 771
important part played by religion in the life of the Aborigines. Mythology and ritual, totemism and beliefs regarding the spirit of man, the Great Creator Spirit who is revealed in the Rainbow Serpent, and the 'mother goddess', are all part of this religious life. The ritual is the prescribed acting of the great myths by fully initiated men; the mythology provides the sanction and pattern for the rites and for present-day behaviour. The emphasis on the Creator Spirit (associated
with the sky) and a kind of 'earth-mother' distinguished [171]
Arnhem Land from Central Australian mythology, though interest in the sky-world and a belief that it is the source of life-giving powers (especially through the Rainbow Serpent and the medicine-men), were widespread in Australia. Mr Chaseling's Chapter 17 shows how the natives of his region are fascinated by the sky-world and in their mythology reveal a desire to go to it.

Further details of north-east Arnhem Land myth and 114
ritual are given in W. L. Warner's *A Black Civilization.* He also discusses fully the totemism of the region. A general

114 introduction to this fundamental aspect of aboriginal life is given in A. P. Elkin's *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them.*

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779 Totemism is fundamentally a complex of beliefs and attitudes based on a doctrine of oneness of life shared by nature and man. In other words, natural species and phenomena are brought into man's social order; that is, they are regarded as members of his local groups, clans, and moieties. Usually, too, a bond that is both social and religious is established between a group of men and women on the one hand and one or more natural species on the other. The latter are the totems of the former. In what is termed cult-society (or 'lodge') totemism, the totem is the symbol of the whole set of myth and ritual, which is the clan's link with, and door into, the 'eternal dream-time', the state and life of the great heroes, the ancestors, the spirits.

796 Mr Chaseling refers to many rites and beliefs which belong to the aboriginal religious world. Those connected with blood, described in Chapter 5, are especially interesting. [262] We notice the taboo on eating food, because of the shedding of blood when obtaining it, or because of the presence of a corpse, and the rite for removing the taboo, which includes a 'totemic well', a sacred meal, and purification by fire. Another interesting rite is the singing of the myth of creation by the medicine-man as a cure (Chapter 10).

842 In Chapter 8, Mr Chaseling refers to the natives' belief regarding conception. The general reader may not be aware that in most regions of the continent, the Aborigines do not regard sexual intercourse as the cause of conception. Mr Chaseling says that was the case in north-east Arnhem Land, but that now, the view has been slightly modified; it is now held that intercourse is an act of preparation for, and an invitation to, the unborn spirit to enter the womb. This agrees with the findings of Spencer and Gillen and others for nearby regions. Dr Warner, however, came to the

conclusion that in north-east Arnhem Land, the natives really 842
did know the physiological facts, but were not interested in
them; they were only interested in 'spiritual conception',
which established a person's place in the social and religious
structure of the tribe. But whatever be the degree of knowledge
or ignorance regarding the physiological facts, there is
no doubt that the accepted spiritual doctrine is one of pre-existence.
The unborn spirits sojourn at the totemic well
waiting to be incarnated, or reincarnated; to that centre [775]
they will return after death; and without the entry of the
pre-existent spirit child into the womb, there could be no
conception.

Everyday Matters

Mr Chaseling is not concerned with discussing complex 114
social and religious problems. His aim is to help us know the
Aboriginal as he is. To this end he provides much information
regarding interesting everyday affairs. There is no smoke-signal [202]
code in this region, and message sticks are simply aids [211]
to memory. The Aborigines like having visitors and are
anxious to keep them. Like the rest of us, they are subject [181]
to flattery, and they use a highly developed form of praise
in asking for favours. The status of the women is low, but 114
some affection is shown between spouses; moreover, women 562
do exercise an important influence on affairs; for they live [593]
longer on the average than the man (they are not killed in
'wars'), and as a result accumulate a greater knowledge of [165]
the everyday myths and legends and of the clan's enemies
and friends. There are about three females to each male, [162]
another consequence of 'warfare', and connected with this
is the fact that usually a man has three wives; but there are [595]
a few cases of men with up to twelve wives.

These and many like facts are recorded in the pages which 114
follow, pages which will do much to help readers appreciate
the Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land as human beings,

different from, and yet like unto, ourselves. For this reason as well as for the spirit in which it is written, I commend Mr Chaseling's book. May it be as 'bread cast upon the waters' of Arnhem Land, which after days, few or many, shall be found by the original inhabitants!

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648 Age men. Very little was known of Arnhem Land and there
was a great deal of guessing. Charts were coastline sketches
plotted by Matthew Flinders in the stormy season in 1803,
when to overcome the tossing of his small boat, he ordered
his sailors to lash him high on the mast with his box of
instruments by his side. In the medley of suggestions made
for the subjugation of east Arnhem Land the Common-
[997] wealth Government accepted the offer of the Methodist
Missionary Society to establish a mission station in the area,
and it was my good fortune to be accepted to commence
the new work.

121 I had a personal interest in these people, for nomads and their ways had teased my fancy from infancy. Both my mother's and father's families were among the pioneers in the Hawkesbury Valley in New South Wales, where they erected their slab huts and grew their maize. Life was hard for the pioneer, but it was also interesting, with its floods, fires, isolation, and Stone Age men. One died from spear wounds, several had hairbreadth escapes, and stories of their adventures retold among the scenes of the events made a happy background for a growing boy. In one region, a crumbling stone fire-place was all that remained of a stone-and-slab homestead where a fatal attack had been made: on another hillside a partly buried hearthstone showed where a settler's wife had defended herself from an enraged warrior with boiling water from her cooking-pots. As a child, my happiest adventures were in caves blackened by ancient camp-fires and bearing the imprint of aboriginal hands, or amongst rounded sandstone pillars in a totem-centre, or beside flat rocks and caves scored by Stone Age artists.

122 In May 1934 my wife and I landed in Darwin. Five
114 hundred miles of trackless bush and the Arafura Sea lay
between us and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the only means
of transport was a lugger. A lugger sounded very glamorous;

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but the *Marree*, being made ready for her three-monthly trip to mission stations in Arnhem Land, lay on a Darwin mud-flat waiting to be scraped and caulked.

A week later it seemed safe to take the boat to sea, and early in the morning we boarded the *Marree* as the jovial Baduan captain was urging his Yulengor crew to row the last of the mail and stores from the beach. Flour, rice, sugar, groceries, trade-goods, petrol, galvanized iron, cement, agricultural tools, a stove, and a medley of small items overflowed to the decks, where young fruit-trees, crates of fowls, ducks, and geese added to the confusion. There were drums of drinking-water, a heap of firewood for use on the trip, and a billy goat for the herds on isolated settlements.

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A Yulengor crew dragged the anchor from the harbour mud, and we were away. By late afternoon the mainland had dropped from sight and we edged our way past the shores of Melville Island. As the sun sank below the island, we boiled our billy in an open drum on deck and prepared for the night. Stars sparkled in a cloudless sky, phosphorescent waves fanned behind us as we rode the gentle swell of Van Diemen's Gulf, and life aboard a lugger seemed good—but not for long. The cockroaches saw to that; they chirped and scuttled through the cabin, chewed labels off tinned foods, ate holes in the bread and nibbled our toenails. Later we were told that seasoned lugger travellers slept in their boots. But with the dawn came a shout from the Yulengor crew, as they sighted beams from the Cape Don Lighthouse, and by sunrise we were wallowing in the notorious tide-rip at the Cape and feeling our way through scattered rocks to an anchorage by the jetty.

Cape Don Lighthouse overlooks many square miles of mud-flats and mangrove swamps, a wide expanse of mud and jungle sheltering a teeming life of trepang, crabs, crocodiles, flying-foxes, mud-hopping fish, and mosquitoes. Apart from the monthly visit of the supply-boat, the only

CHAPTER SEVEN

Languages, Signs, and Smoke-Signals

197 Popular opinion has it that all aborigines speak one language,
and I have often been asked if I can 'speak aboriginal'.
Actually, there are scores of different tribal languages
throughout Australia, and within these there are hundreds
of horde-dialects. In the 34,000 square miles of Arnhem
Land there are five distinct languages, one for each of the
[621] five groups of hordes, and as there are between a dozen and
forty hordes in each horde-group, there are well over a
hundred dialects in this small part of Australia.

● [114] In the group that I knew best, which extended from Cape
[621] Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, there were thirty-five hordes,
each speaking its own dialect. If you had mastered one of
them, Yulengor a few miles away probably could not have
understood you. I found that when members of these
191 widely separated hordes met, they could not make themselves
197 understood in their own dialects, but experimented on
several till they found one familiar to both parties.

Stone Age men are born linguists, and not only is their
speech grammatically correct, but youths amuse themselves
by conversing in some little-known dialect. Old Wonggu
[522] occasionally introduced a Macassar sentence into ordinary
conversation so as to puzzle me, and he would enjoy his joke
in using this dialect learnt fifty years previously from East
Indian traders. English words and phrases, as well as
pidgin English, have occasionally been picked up from
traders and beachcombers.

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191 Since it should be easier for one white man to learn an